PROPERTY OF
THE CHURCH ON THE WAY

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Revelation.

The
Study
Bible

THE STUDY BIBLE

Editor JOHN STIRLING

REVELATION

A Little Library of Exposition

with

New Studies

by

THE ARCHBISHOP OF ARMAGH

AND

A. S. PEAKE, D.D.

Late Professor of Biblical Exegesis, Victoria University, Manchester

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TO THE READER OF THE BOOK OF REVELATION

Although many things in this book are hard to understand, and its pages are more like veils of mystery than visions of revelation, it is the only book in the possession of man which claims to present the divine aspect of human history. Without it we should be in the dark, we should have no sure knowledge of the end to which the whole creation moves, of the forces that are at work for and against it, or of the stages through which it must pass before it can be accomplished. Hence the Seer lifts for a few brief moments the veils which in ordinary times bound our view, giving us, for courage and comfort in the struggle, a glimpse of the things that are unseen and eternal in the world around us, the heaven above us, and the ages still to come.

These visions are in this little volume selected for special thought. They are illustrated and interpreted by notes and comments from the writings of ancient and modern scholars who have given them particular study.

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An Appreciation

THE BOOK OF REVELATION

BY

THE ARCHBISHOP OF ARMAGH

THE
FIRST
STUDY

The Most Rev. Charles Frederick D'Arcy, D.D., F.B.A., is the Archbishop of Armagh, and the author of: *A Short Study of Ethics*, *Idealism and Theology*, *Ruling Ideas of our Lord*; *Christianity and the Supernatural* and *Christian Ethics and Modern Thought* in a series of Anglican Church Handbooks; *God and Freedom in Human Experience*, *Science and Creation*, *The Christian Outlook in the Modern World*, etc.

THE BOOK OF REVELATION

By The Archbishop of Armagh

THERE is no document of the sub-apostolic age which gives so clear and vivid an insight into the mind of the early Church, and into its position and circumstances, as the Revelation of John. Its value in this respect has been obscured by the eager curiosity of the multitude of interpreters who, turning aside from the elements which reveal the qualities and characteristics of the age in which the book was written, devoted all their powers to the construction in detail, out of its imagery, of a scheme of prophetic anticipation of the great events of many ages.

Modern critics who have examined the question with minute care are now, for the most part, agreed that the book must be dated at, or near, the end of the reign of Domitian. The year A.D. 95 is regarded by high authorities as probable. Domitian began his reign with a display of reforming zeal in morals and religion. But after the revolt of Antonius Saturninus there came a marked change. The emperor was seized with a mania of distrust: no man's life was safe, and in his last years he seemed to become a veritable madman. He sentenced his cousin Flavius Clemens to death, whose wife Domitilla he banished on a charge of atheism, perhaps a description of Christianity. He died in A.D. 96 after a reign of fifteen years.

Among the causes of the persecution of Christians in the Roman Empire may be mentioned the bitter antagonism of the Jews, an antagonism accentuated by an endeavour to divert from themselves the dislike which their doctrines and manner of life excited amongst their neighbours. The Acts of the Apostles contains

many indications of the effects of this Jewish opposition. A further cause was undoubtedly the exclusiveness of Christianity : it refused to take its place as one among the multitude of cults then so widely spread and so strangely intermingled in the great Empire. But the most potent cause of all was the springing up of a new cult, a cult which, unlike the multitude of local and special cults which had settled down into relationships of more or less tolerant association within the broad domains of Roman power, became in practice universal. This was the worship of the emperor. It was a new thing, but, during the first century after Christ, it had grown with amazing rapidity. Augustus had maintained the legend that he was but the first among the citizens of Rome. He had refused divine honours in the capital, but had permitted them in Asia. And it was here that the cult of Rome and of the emperor developed most rapidly. Pergamum and Ephesus took the lead.

It belonged essentially to this worship that it should very speedily become a test of loyalty. There was no conflict between it and the religions which we of to-day are accustomed to call Pagan. From the very nature of the mind steeped in polytheistic tradition, the addition of another divinity was easily accepted. Thus it was that the traditional cults of the ancient world were prepared to receive the new worship with complete toleration. It was one more, that was all. But, from the political point of view, it had a significance all its own ; and the vast extent of the Roman Empire, stretching from the German forests to the Sahara and from farthest Spain to the Euphrates, gave it, very speedily, an extension which no other cult of the age could rival.

To us of the West, with our long Christian tradition, such a worship as this seems monstrous and absurd. But the divinity of monarchs was no new thing. To the polytheist, the whole conception of divinity is on a lower level than that of our thought. Nor do moral considerations count for much. The most characteristic quality of the " god " is power ; and, in the world of the first century, what power was so impressive and so visible as that of the emperor !

A very modern instance will make the position clearer. The cult called Shinto in Japan is essentially a worship of the national genius. It is the organised expression of Japanese patriotism. For it, the Emperor of Japan is a god. It is, or was, sometimes said of him that he is the greatest of all gods. He receives something very like worship. There are conservatives who maintain that such reverence should be compulsory, for patriotic reasons. Here is a very close parallel to the worship of the emperor in the old Roman world. He stood for the majesty of that mighty State. He was the incarnation of its power. Surely he was god, a great god, and the paying of worship to his image was naturally the mark of a good citizen. It became the inevitable test of loyalty.

There is no more illuminating commentary upon this attitude of mind than the correspondence of the younger Pliny with the great Emperor Trajan, about the Christians of Bithynia. Pliny was governor of that province as the emperor's legate. A friend of the emperor, he wrote to him frequently when questions of doubt or difficulty arose. He was puzzled and troubled when he found it necessary, as part of his duty, to deal with persons accused of Christianity. The date of these trials and of the correspondence was

probably very early in the second century, perhaps sixteen or seventeen years after the visions of St. John, recorded in the Revelation. At this time, it is clear from Pliny's letters that Christianity had become a recognised crime. To be a wilful and determined Christian was to incur the penalty of death. This is taken for granted. But the refined and amiable governor was no willing persecutor. What was he to do? He had had no experience of the trials of Christians. Were the young to be punished as well as the adult? Should repentance merit pardon? Should the mere profession of Christianity be punished, or must there be also proved crime? Or perhaps it was only when actual crimes were proved that punishment should follow. He then explains the method he had been following. It was only when the accused showed persistent contumacy that he ordered them to punishment; for such obstinacy was in itself deserving of penalty. Then the accusations increased in number. Informers became active. What was to be done? Finally Pliny thought of a test which evidently seemed to him to be marked by moderation. He ordered the accused to repeat after him an invocation of the gods, and offer worship, with wine and incense, to the image of the emperor. Those who accepted this test he released. Some who confessed themselves Christians, or that they had formerly been of that persuasion, also took the test and worshipped the image of the emperor, and the images of the gods, and cursed Christ. But these, it would seem, he detained until he should receive advice from Trajan.

Then follows a profoundly interesting account of Christian worship as practised by these poor people. They affirmed that all their guilt consisted in meeting

on a certain fixed day before it was light, and singing in alternate verses a hymn to Christ as God, after which they bound themselves to commit no crime, and then it was their custom to come together again to partake of food of an ordinary and innocent kind. Pliny declares that he found nothing but a depraved and excessive superstition.

It is clear also from Pliny's further account that Christianity had spread so widely in Bithynia that the temples were deserted and the festivals abandoned. He affirms that the superstition had spread through the villages and country districts as well as the cities, and that the sale of sacrificial animals had almost ceased. He thinks that if his way of dealing with the evil is adopted, if, that is, as he says, a " pænitentiæ locus," a door of repentance, is left open, a multitude will be reclaimed.

To all this, Trajan replies briefly. He approves Pliny's action in general terms, but will lay down no strict rule. He orders that no search should be made for Christians. If proved guilty they must be punished, but those who accept the test must be pardoned, even though formerly suspected. Secret informations must not be admitted as evidence. Such a practice makes a bad precedent and is contrary to the spirit of the age.

When it is remembered that Christianity was a recognised crime, and as such deserving of the extreme penalty, the moderation of Trajan's decision, and the trouble and perplexity which appear in every line of Pliny's letter, enable us to realise that, in these men, there was none of the ferocity of the true persecutor, and no desire to inflict suffering. They were anxious to mitigate the severity of the law as much as they

could. Yet the demand that they made upon the Christian was one to which he could not accede, unless he was prepared to give up the Faith which was to him, if he were true to his calling, dearer than life. Here indeed was the most tragic and the most tremendous clash of ideals that the world has ever known. And this is the situation which the Apocalypse of John confronts.

It was in the reign of Domitian that this inevitable opposition between the Christian faith and the deification of earthly power began to assume definite form. Christianity stood revealed to itself and to the community in which it existed as the religion which could make no compromise with emperor-worship. It was moreover an aggressive and growing religion. Its aim was to " make disciples of all the nations." Christians might be poor and despised persons for the most part, but they were always at work to win converts. In this respect they contrasted with Jews. The latter did indeed make proselytes, but they did not show the burning zeal of the Christian evangelist. The exclusiveness of the Jew might be passed over, the hostility of the Christian to all forms of idolatry could not be concealed. The material force of the Empire and the spiritual force of the new religion were bound to come into conflict. When Domitian was hailed, at his command, as " Dominus ac Deus noster," " Our Lord and our God," it became clear to the minds of Christians that the time of inevitable trial was at hand. Only a generation had passed since the terrible persecution under Nero. It appeared that an even greater and more widely spread persecution was beginning. It is true that the persecution under Domitian did not prove as overwhelming as it promised to be. Yet the instinct

of Christian anticipation was justified by the events of the succeeding generations.

The great series of connected visions which form the main portion of the book of the Revelation begins with the fourth chapter. Here and in the fifth chapter are found two complementary scenes, the meaning of which is, in general, clear and unmistakable. In the first, the seer beholds a throne set in heaven and one sitting upon the throne, but of this Supreme Being no description is given, but a few words which convey an impression of dazzling light and colour. As in the Old Testament, there is no "form," no "similitude." And round about the throne are four and twenty lesser thrones and on them are seated four and twenty elders, representing surely the twelve tribes of Israel and the twelve apostles, that is, all those to whom the knowledge of the true God has been given. This interpretation has been questioned, but the seventh chapter, where the tribes of Israel and the great multitude out of every nation are separately mentioned, seems to bear it out. And "in the midst of the throne and round about the throne" are four living creatures, bearing the likeness respectively of the lion, the calf, the man, and the eagle. These are the Cherubim, the throne-bearers of God, described variously in Isaiah and Ezekiel. The view which regards them as representing the whole creation of living beings, the lion standing for untamed nature, the calf for tamed nature, the man for humanity, the eagle for the creatures of the air, seems the most reasonable. They symbolise the universe, supporting the throne of God. Regarding them, as some authorities do, as a high order of angelic beings, need not destroy this symbolism, for no one would suppose that, except in symbolic description,

angels could be imagined with such forms as these.

Thus it is from all creation that there rises to God day and night unceasingly the great ascription, " Holy, Holy, Holy, is the Lord God, the Almighty, which was, and which is, and which is to come." Then the four and twenty elders fall down before the throne and worship Him that liveth for ever and ever, and, casting their crowns before the throne, cry, " Thou art worthy, our Lord and our God, to receive the glory, and the honour, and the power, for Thou didst create all things, and because of Thy will they were and were created."

The meaning is clear : the whole company of those to whom the knowledge of the truth has come join with all creation in the praise of the Creator. Here is a magnificent expression of the great monotheistic faith which Christianity had inherited from Israel, and which marked off the true worshippers from all idolaters.

The scene develops. " I saw," says the seer, " in the right hand of him that sat on the throne a book written within and on the back, close sealed with seven seals." It is the scroll of destiny in the hand (or on the hand) of God. And a strong angel proclaims with a great voice, " Who is worthy to open the book and to loose the seals thereof ? " But no one is able to open the book. John weeps : because the mystery is impenetrable. But one of the elders speaks to him : " Weep not. Behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the root of David, hath overcome, to open the book and its seven seals." Then occurs a strange and surprising thing. The Lion is revealed as a Lamb, and a Lamb as though it had been slain. And he comes and takes the book. Then the four and twenty elders fall down and worship, presenting, in their

representative character, " bowls of incense which are the prayers of saints." " And they sing a new song, saying, Worthy art Thou to take the book and to open the seals thereof, for Thou wast slain and didst purchase unto God with Thy blood men of every tribe and tongue and people and nation, and madest them to be unto our God a kingdom and priests, and they reign on the earth." Then is heard the voice of angels in countless multitudes praising the Lamb that was slain. And finally every created thing throughout the universe to its utmost bounds is heard giving glory to God and to the Lamb. And the four living creatures say, Amen, and the elders fall down and worship.

This magnificent scene strikes the key-note of the whole book. Its meaning is clear. While there is imminent danger on earth, and fear because of the desperate uncertainty of the position in which Christians are placed, in heaven there is absolute certainty. On earth mortal man sets himself up for worship as a god; in heaven reigns the King who lives for ever and ever. Moreover, the destiny of mankind is in the hand of God, and one only can take that scroll and open it, even the Lamb that was slain. He is Lord of the destinies of humanity, because of His redeeming death.

The contrast thus strikingly revealed between the disasters and confusions of earth and the calm certainties of heaven appears again and again in the book until the climax is reached. After the opening of the first six seals, in process of which war, famine, pestilence, and terrible judgment are manifested, comes the sealing of the hundred and forty-four thousand, and the vision of the great multitude which no man can number, in white robes, and palms in their hands, whose blessedness is described in language which has thrilled Christian

souls ever since (ch. vii.). Again, after the opening of the seventh seal and the sounding of six of the seven trumpets, heralding woe after woe, there comes, with the sounding of the seventh trumpet, the proclamation that the " kingdom of the world is become the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign for ever and ever." And so the alternation of earthly sorrow and heavenly victory proceeds, until " Babylon the great is fallen," until there appears the vision of the " Word of God," who is " King of Kings and Lord of Lords," going forth to conquest, followed by the " armies which are in heaven."

It is in the cryptic description of the Beast and his image, an image which was to be worshipped, so that " as many as should not worship the beast should be killed," that we must find a very clear and definite reference to the trial which emperor-worship imposed upon Christians. The guarded language is significant. " Here is wisdom," says the writer. " He that hath understanding let him count the number of the beast, for it is the number of a man." The seer is dealing with matters which must be spoken of with discretion.

After this, the worship of the image is referred to again and again, with tremendous words of warning. In ch. xiv. 9, an angel proclaims with a great voice, " If any man worshippeth the beast and his image, and receiveth a mark on his forehead or upon his hand, he also shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God." And again in ver. 11 of the same chapter, a similar warning is given ; and there follow the words, " Here is the patience of the saints, they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus," and then is added, " I heard a voice from heaven, saying, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from hence-

forth : yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours." Surely it is clear that this blessing is here pronounced on those who, refusing to worship the image, suffer death. And further instance can be added to instance, as the visions proceed : the worship of the image is the sin on which judgment is pronounced continually ; while for those who suffer rather than worship the beast and his image is reserved the glory of the first resurrection (ch. xx. 4–6).

The book ends with a magnificent description of the new creation, and of the vision of the new and heavenly Jerusalem, in which the writer exhausts the power of such imagery as an Eastern mind can draw from the splendour of gold and precious stones. But better things are not forgotten, for when the new Jerusalem is coming down from heaven, John says, " I heard a great voice out of the throne saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He shall dwell with them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be with them and be their God. And He shall wipe away every tear from their eyes, and there shall be no more death, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain any more " (ch. xxi. 3, 4). The writer is especially indebted to the monumental Commentary by Dr. R. H. Charles in the *International Critical* series.

The Book of Revelation aimed to put Christ at the centre of religious faith and hope. His words are the complete law of God, His testimony is the full content and inspiration of prophecy. The Churches are under His eye, and responsible only to Him. He also opens the book of God's final purposes for mankind. His birth, death, and resurrection began that victory of good over evil, which His coming and reign will bring to a glorious completion, for His coming is the coming of God. The power and abiding worth of the book is in this splendid faith, against all appearances, in the Kingship of Christ and God; in the strong hope which maintained itself amid persecution and unto death; and in the intensity of emotion through which the language, though both our ignorance and our knowledge make it in part less impressive than it was at first, has still the power, and in many passages the unimpaired power, to stir in us an answering hope and faith.—F. C. PORTER.

It is an apocalypse unfolding in symbolical forms the characteristic features of the struggle between good and evil when the gospel enters the field; it is the revelation of the coming of Christ, because it shows not only that He will come, but that He does come; that He who has been revealed, is being revealed, and will yet be revealed.—W. BOYD CARPENTER.

NOTES AND COMMENTS

Drawn from many sources to illustrate the great Texts and Teaching of the Book

THE SECOND STUDY

MANY DIFFERENT INTERPRETATIONS have been offered of this Book of Revelation. From the Apostolic Age to that of Constantine it was accepted as a symbolic interpretation of the spiritual kingdom of Christ. No serious attempt was made to see in the visions a panorama of history. But when the triumph of Constantine relieved the Church of persecution a literal fulfilment of the prophecies of this book seemed to be at hand. The Church turned from its hope of the Lord's Return to what looked like the millennium of John's Revelation. The fall of the Empire, however, carried with it these dreams of temporal greatness. The Church was compelled to re-examine the book, and from this period dates that chronological interpretation which runs through its study to-day.

Modern scholars, for the sake of clearness, usually group the interpreters into three schools: (1) *Those who believe that the Revelation has been fulfilled—that its theme is the triumph of Christianity over Judaism and Paganism, signalised in the downfall of Jerusalem and Rome;* (2) *Those who hold that, with the exception of the first three chapters, it refers to events still to come;* (3) *Those who regard the visions as a symbolic representation of the fortunes of the Church from the first century to the end of time; though its setting is local and largely materialistic, its message is universal and spiritual and in its principles rather than its incidents will be found the key to its interpretation. Advocates of this last interpretation hold that in the course of history there may be more than one typical, imperfect, historical fulfilment, shadowing forth the great and final fulfilment of the prophecy.*

THE REVELATION

ON THE THRESHOLD

THE BEATITUDE OF FAITH AND HOPE

Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of the prophecy, and keep the things which are written therein : for the time is at hand.

Rev. I. 3.

NO form of early Christian literature answers so well as the Apocalypse to the Baconian definition of the service rendered by genuine poetry in raising and erecting the mind above the tyranny of mere appearances. Emphatically the Apocalypse aims at " submitting the shows of things to the desires of the mind." It reads history under the light of faith and hope ; it floods the evil present with transcendent anticipations ; it reasserts the supremacy of the ideal and of the Spirit, against depressing memory and forebodings. It is a pictorial expansion of the Christian principle : " We walk by faith, not by sight."—J. MOFFATT.

The book of the Apocalypse is the precious vessel in which the treasure of Christian hope has been deposited for all ages of the Church, but especially for the Church *under the Cross*. The more deeply the Church plants in the earth the stakes of her tent, and establishes herself at her ease here below, the more does the Apocalypse become to her a foreign book. The more, on the other hand, tempestuous winds shake the curtains of her temporary dwelling-place, and threaten to break their cords, the more does she feel the value of this marvellous book, which teaches her to look up continually towards the Bridegroom, whose return she expects. This is indeed her proper attitude

in all times, whether those of prosperity or of persecution. Did not the Lord say to the believer : " Be like unto men that wait for their lord when he will return from the wedding " ?—F. GODET.

When the persecution (under which this book was written and read) raged in Asia, a vast multitude of Christians presented themselves before the Proconsul, challenging him to proceed against them. According to the testimony of the grave Eusebius, a contemporary, the slaughter of men, women, and children went on by twenties, sixties, hundreds, till the instruments of execution were worn out, and the executioners could kill no more. Yet he tells us, as an eye-witness, that, as soon as any Christians were condemned, others ran from all parts, and surrounded the tribunals, confessing the faith, and joyfully receiving their condemnation, and singing songs of thanksgiving and triumph to the last. Thus was the Roman power overcome. Thus did the Son of Man take to Himself great power and reign in the hearts of His people in the public theatre of the world.—J. H. NEWMAN.

The Golden Age lies onwards. We are longing for, not the Church of the Past, but the Church of the Future. Ours is not an antiquated sentimental yearning for the imaginary perfection of ages gone by, not a conservative stagnation content with things as they are, but *Hope*—for the individual, and for the society. By Him we have access by faith, and rejoice in hope for the glory that shall be revealed. A better, wiser, purer age than that of childhood. An age more enlightened and more holy than the world has yet seen. It is this spirit of expectation which is the preparation for the Advent. Every gift of noble origin is breathed upon by hope's perfect breath.—F. W. ROBERTSON.

THE BENEDICTION OF A PROPHET

John to the seven churches which are in Asia: Grace to you and peace, from him which is and which was and which is to come; and from the seven Spirits which are before his throne; and from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth.

Rev. I. 4–5.

THE Asia here is not to be regarded as co-extensive with what we know as Asia Minor. Its boundaries varied at different periods; but roughly, and for the present purpose, they may be regarded here as the Caicus on the north, the Macander on the south, the Phrygian Hills on the east, and the Mediterranean on the west.

W. Boyd Carpenter.

Grace he desires for us, and peace from God, the eternal Father, and from the sevenfold Spirit, and from Jesus Christ, who gave testimony to the Father in His incarnation. He names the Son in the third place, as he was to speak further of Him. He names Him also last in order, as He is the first and the last, for he had already named Him in the Father by saying, "who was to come."—Bede.

The sacred name used by John is the very foundation of eternity. The "I AM" indeed contains in itself three tenses, as it expresses the immutability of the Divine nature; but on account of the changeable periods of time in which our mortality exists, we say, He hath been, He is, and He shall be.—I. Williams.

The triple title applied to Christ corresponds to the three ideas of this book. Christ the Revealing Prophet, the Life-Giving High-Priest, and the real Ruler of mankind.—Vitringa.

There is no doubt that by the "seven spirits" we

are to understand, not indeed the sevenfold operations of the Holy Ghost, but the Holy Ghost sevenfold in His operations. He is regarded here not so much in His personal unity, as in His manifold energies. These are here represented under the number seven, being as it is the number of completeness in the Church.

R. C. TRENCH.

By the seven is signified the perfection of the Church universal, and by writing to the seven he shows the fullness of one.—AUGUSTINE.

That which the Tempter held forth to Jesus on condition of worshipping him, He has now attained by the way of His humiliation unto death—victory over the world.—DE WETTE.

Above all emperors and kings, above all armies and multitudes, John thought of the Crucified as ruling and directing the course of history, and certain in His own due time to manifest His sovereignty.

E. H. PLUMPTRE.

What are we to see in the simple Anno Domini of our dates and superscriptions, but that for some reason the great world-history has been bending itself to the lowly person of Jesus ?—H. BUSHNELL.

A handful read the philosophers ; myriads would die for Christ ; they in their popularity would barely found a school ; Christ from His cross rules the world.

F. W. FARRAR.

Through the Kingdom of Heaven is the invisible God, the incomprehensible Trinity eternally breaking forth and manifesting itself in a boundless height and depth of blissful wonders, opening and displaying itself to all creatures in an infinite variation and endless multiplicity of its powers, beauties, joys, and glories.

W. LAW.

A ROYAL PRIESTHOOD'S PRAISE

Unto him that loveth us, and loosed us from our sins by his blood; and he made us to be *a kingdom,* to be *priests unto his God and Father; to him* be *the glory and the dominion for ever and ever. Amen.*

Rev. I. 5, 6.

THE doxology here is two-fold: glory and dominion. The doxologies in which the redeemed Church takes part grow in strength in the earlier chapters of the book. It is threefold in ch. iv. 9–11; fourfold in ch. v. 13; and it reaches the climax of sevenfold in ch. vii. 12. A study of these would serve to remind us of the prominence which the doxological element assumes in the highest worship of the Church, and the very subordinate place which it oftentimes takes in ours. We can make our requests known unto God, and this is well, for it is prayer; but to give glory to God, quite apart from anything to be directly gotten by ourselves in return, to thank God for His great glory, this is better, for it is adoration; but, if better, it is rarer as well.—E. H. PLUMPTRE.

The Contemplative is truly a king, yea a fourfold king: king of the world through voluntary poverty, king of the flesh through temperance and prudence, king of the devil through humble patience, king of heaven through perfect love.—RICHARD ROLLE.

If we with earnest effort could succeed
To make our life one long connected prayer,
As lives of some have been perhaps and are,
If, never leaving Thee, we had no need
Our wandering spirits back again to lead
Into Thy presence, but continued there,
Like angels standing on the highest stair
Of the sapphire throne, this were to pray indeed.

But if distractions manifold prevail,
And if in this we must confess we fail,
Grant us to keep at least a prompt desire,
Continual readiness for prayer and praise,
An altar heaped and waiting to take fire
With the least spark and leap into a blaze.

R. C. TRENCH.

The book declares the kingship and priesthood of the children of God—a sovereignty over human fears and sufferings—their priesthood in their lives of consecration, and their offering of themselves even unto death.

And all Thy saints do overcome
By Thy blood and their martyrdom.

W. BOYD CARPENTER.

As kings they overcome the world, govern their own spirits, conquer Satan, and have power with God in prayer. He hath made them priests ; given them access to God, enabled them to enter into the holiest, and to offer spiritual and acceptable sacrifices ; He has given them a spirit suitable to this character ; and for these high honours and favours they are bound to ascribe to Him dominion and glory for ever.

M. HENRY.

Because the King of kings and heavenly Priest united us unto His own body by offering Himself for us, there is not one of the saints who has not spiritually the office of priesthood, in that he is a member of the eternal Priest.—BEDE.

Hath sanctified us to the service of God, consecrating us, as His church, a kingdom of priests, to honour God, and to give us the privilege of a near approach unto Him, with assurance of acceptance and favour.

M. LOWMAN.

THE SUBLIME THEME

Behold, he cometh with the clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they which pierced him; and all the tribes of the earth shall mourn over him. Even so, Amen. I am the Alpha and the Omega, saith the Lord God, which is and which was and which is to come, the Almighty.
Rev. I. 7–8.

THE motto of the book: He comes! With great impressiveness it is put into the mouth of God Himself.
W. BOUSSET.

The coming of Christ, from the time of the Ascension to that of the Parousia, is the true subject of the Apocalypse, just as His first coming, between the fall of man and the Incarnation, was the true subject of Old Testament prophecy. "Behold, He shall come," said the last of the prophets, at the highest summit of ancient revelation, speaking of the Messiah-Jehovah. The history of the world, in its essential character, is summed up in these three sayings: He is coming; He has come; He will come again. It is upon this idea that the whole plan of the apocalyptic drama rests.—F. GODET.

There are many comings of Christ. He came in the flesh as a Mediatorial Presence. He came at the destruction of Jerusalem. He came, a spiritual Presence, when the Holy Ghost was given. He comes now in every signal manifestation of redeeming power. Any great reformation of morals and religion is a Coming of Christ. A great Revolution, like a thunderstorm, violently sweeping the evil away for the good, is a Coming of Christ. Christ will come at the end of the world, when the spirit of all these comings will be concentrated.—F. W. ROBERTSON.

"He comes" is the key. He comes when Paganism

falls ; he comes when brute world-force is cast down ; He comes when worldliness falls—He comes and His coming is spreading ever over the world, shining more and more unto the perfect day. Clouds may gather and make the epochs which are nearest the full day darker than those which preceded them, but still He comes in every epoch leading up to the golden day.

W. Boyd Carpenter.

All men, even the holiest, shall mourn at the visible approach of that day. But as Bengel well remarks, there will then be two kinds of mourning—the one due to the terror of an enemy, the other to the terror of the penitent. The former will prevail in the impenitent and careless world ; the latter even in the comforted and rejoicing Church. The holiest saint when that Presence is manifested, in the midst of his, " Lo, this is our God ; we have waited for Him, and He will save us," will personally feel with St. Peter, " Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord."—H. Alford.

The world is very evil,
The times are waxing late :
Be sober and keep vigil,
The Judge is at the gate,
The Judge that comes in mercy,
The Judge that comes with might,
To terminate the evil,
To diadem the right.

Bernard de Morlaix.

The words " they which pierced Him " mean not only the Jews who demanded His crucifixion of Pilate, but likewise all those who wound Him by their transgressions, " who crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put Him to an open shame," Heb. vi. 6.

Dean Woodhouse.

A VISION OF THE VICTOR

THE SEER

I John, your brother and partaker with you in the tribulation and kingdom and patience which are *in Jesus, was in the isle that is called Patmos, for the word of God and the testimony of Jesus. I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and I heard behind me a great voice, as of a trumpet saying, What thou seest, write in a book, and send* it *to the seven churches ; unto Ephesus, and unto Smyrna, and unto Pergamum, and unto Thyatira, and unto Sardis, and unto Philadelphia, and unto Laodicea.*

Rev. I. 9–11.

JOHN stood on the heights of Patmos in the centre of a world of his own. The island, then probably less inhabited than now, was almost a solitude. " He was in the Spirit," withdrawn from earthly things, like Moses on Sinai, or Elijah on Carmel. But the view from the topmost peak, or, indeed, from any lofty elevation in the island, unfolds an unusual sweep, such as well became the " Apocalypse," the " *unveiling* " of the future to the eyes of the solitary seer. It was " a great and high mountain," whence he could see things to come. Above, there was always the broad heaven of a Grecian sky ; sometimes bright, with its " white cloud," sometimes torn with " lightnings and thunderings," and darkened by " great hail," or cheered with " a rainbow like unto an emerald." Over the high tops of Icaria, Samos, and Naxos rise the mountains of Asia Minor, among which would lie, to the north, the circle of the Seven Churches to which his addresses were to be sent. Around him stood the mountains and islands of the archipelago—" every mountain and island shall be moved out of their places " ; " every island fled away, and the mountains were not found." When he looked around, above or below, " the sea " would

always occupy the foremost place. He saw "the things that are in the heavens and in the earth and in the sea." The angel was "not to hurt the earth or the sea," nor "to blow on the earth or on the sea." "A great mountain," like that of the volcanic Thera, "as it were burning with fire," was "to be cast into the sea." The angel was to stand with "his right foot upon the sea, and his left foot on the earth"; "the vial was to be poured out upon the sea"; the voices of heaven were like the sound of the waves beating on the shore, as "the sound of many waters"; "the millstone was cast into the sea"; "the sea was to give up the dead which were in it"; and the time would come when this wall of his imprisonment, which girdled round the desolate island, should have ceased; "there shall be no more sea." Such was the scene of the Apocalypse, varied, doubtless, by other images drawn from the prophetic books of the older Scriptures and from the report or actual sight of the great cities of the earth.—A. P. STANLEY.

And God's own profound
Was above me, and round me the mountains,
And under, the sea,
And within me my heart to bear witness
What was and shall be!—BROWNING.

O breath of God! O my delight
In many a vigil of the night,
Like the great voice in Patmos heard
By John, the evangelist of the Word,
I hear thee behind me saying, Write
In a book the things that thou hast seen,
The things that are, and that have been,
And the things that shall hereafter be!

This convent, on the rocky crest
Of the Calabrian hills, to me
A Patmos is, wherein I rest :
While round about me like a sea
The white mists roll, and overflow
The world that lies unseen below
In darkness and in mystery.
Here in the spirit, in the vast
Embrace of God's encircling arm,
Am I uplifted from all harm.

LONGFELLOW.

Kingdom and patience ! as if in Jesus Christ were made compatible authority and suffering, the impassive throne of a monarch and the meek subjection of a cross, the reigning power of a prince and the mild endurance of a lamb. What more striking paradox ! And yet in this you have exactly that which is the prime distinction of Christianity. It is a kingdom erected by patience. It reigns in virtue of submission. Its victory and dominion are the fruits of a most peculiar and singular endurance. By this I mean not the reward, but the proper results or effects of endurance. Christ reigns over human souls and in them, erecting there His spiritual kingdom, not by force of will exerted in any way, but through His most sublime passivity in yielding Himself to the wrongs and the malice of His adversaries. And with Him, in this most remarkable peculiarity, all disciples are called to be partakers ; even as the Apostle in his exile at Patmos writes : " I John, who also am your brother and companion in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus."—H. BUSHNELL.

We must be only joined by pains Divine
Of spirits blent in mutual memories.

GEORGE ELIOT.

THE APPEARANCE OF THE PRIEST-KING

And I turned to see the voice which spake with me. And having turned I saw seven golden candlesticks; and in the midst of the candlesticks one like unto a son of man, clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about at the breasts with a golden girdle. And his head and his hair were white as white wool, white as snow; and his eyes were as a flame of fire; and his feet like unto burnished brass, as if it had been refined in a furnace; and his voice as the voice of many waters. And he had in his right hand seven stars: and out of his mouth proceeded a sharp two-edged sword: and his countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength.

Rev. I. 12–16.

THE human personality of Christ in its glorification, is clothed with the splendour of Divine majesty. His garment, the long talar reaching to the feet, denotes the High-priest; the golden girdle the King. Christ is both these in the highest power, since He even makes His people kings and priests. According to Josephus the priests wore their girdles about their breast.

J. P. LANGE.

The description of the glorified Lord, sublime as a purely mental conception, but intolerable if we were to give it an outward form and expression, and picture Him with this sword proceeding from His mouth, these feet as burning brass, this hair white as wool, and the rest, may suggest a few reflections on the apocalyptic, and generally the Hebrew symbolism, and the very significant relations of difference and opposition in which it stands to the Greek. Religion and art for the Greek ran into one another with no very great preponderance of the claims of the former over the latter. Even in his religious symbolism the sense of beauty, of form, of proportion, overrules every other and

must, at all costs, find its satisfaction. . . . But with the Hebrew symbolism it is altogether different. The first necessity there is that the symbol should set forth truly and fully the religious idea of which it is intended to be the vehicle. How it would appear when it clothed itself in an outward form and shape, whether it would find favour and allowance at the bar of taste, this was quite a secondary consideration ; may be confidently affirmed not to have been a consideration at all ; for, indeed, with the one exception of the cherubim, there was no intention that it should embody itself there, but rather that it should remain ever and only a purely mental conception, the unembodied sign of an idea. Thus, in this present description of Christ, sublime and majestic as it is, it is only such so long as we keep it wholly apart from any external embodiment.

R. C. Trench.

What the apostle saw was not seven candlesticks, which are a modern piece of furniture, but seven lamps. There is a distinct reference in this, as in all the symbols of the Apocalypse, to the Old Testament. We know that in the Jewish Temple there stood, as an emblem of Israel's work in the world, the great seven-branched candlestick burning for ever before the veil and beyond the altar. The difference between the two symbols is as obvious as their resemblance. The ancient lamp had the seven bowls springing from a single stem. It was a formal unity. The New Testament seer saw not one lamp with seven arms rising from one pillar, but seven distinct lamps—the emblems of a unity which was not formal, but real. They were one in their perfect manifoldness, because of Him who walked in the midst. In which difference lies a representation of one great element in the superiority of the Church over

Israel, that for the hard material oneness of the separated nation there has come the true spiritual oneness of the churches of the saints, one not because of any external connection, but by reason that Christ is in them. The seven-branched lamp lies at the bottom of the Tiber. There let it lie. We have a better thing, in these manifold lights, which stand before the Throne of the New Temple, and blend into one, because lighted from one Source, fed by one Spirit, tended and watched by one Lord.—A. MACLAREN.

It is from this picture of the glory of the Lord that the emblems by which He describes Himself in His messages to the seven churches are drawn. These emblems represent the qualities in virtue of which He will have power to do all that He announces to them.

F. GODET.

The seven stars are held in His right hand as a wreath or garland, not on his right hand, as a number of jewelled rings. If the seven churches which the seven stars symbolise were *on* the Lord's hands as rings they would seem to be serving or adorning Him, and not to be the objects of His action : but now that He holds them in His hand, He appears as their Guardian, their Provider, their Nourisher : and we may add their Possessor, who brings them out and puts them forth to be seen when He pleases.—H. ALFORD.

The feet on fire is the Church of the last time, to be examined more severely, and tried by pressures. For the aurichalcum (or fine brass) is brass, by much fire and chemical process brought to the colour of gold.—BEDE.

It is good for me, O Lord, in the furnace to be with Thee, rather than to be without Thee, even in heaven. For what have I in heaven but Thee, and what on

earth have I desired apart from Thee ? The furnace proveth the gold, and just men the trial of adversity. There art Thou, O Lord, in the midst of them that are gathered together in Thy Name. Why do we fear ? The fire rageth : but the Lord is with us.

BERNARD.

O Thou, who art the true Sun of the world, evermore rising and never going down ; who by Thy most wholesome appearing and sight dost nourish, and make joyful all things, as well that are in heaven, as also that are on earth ; we beseech Thee mercifully and favourably to shine into our hearts, that the night and darkness of sin, and the mists of error on every side, being driven away, Thou brightly shining within our hearts, we may all our life long go without any stumbling or offence, and may walk as in the day-time, being pure and clean from the works of darkness, and abounding in all good works which Thou hast prepared for us to walk in.

ERASMUS.

The gold signifies charity, and to have the golden girdle on the breasts is to restrain, through the chains of love alone, all the motions of the changing thoughts.

GREGORY THE GREAT.

It is the light of faith and the gold of charity, which form the Church of Christ, represented by the golden lamps. In vain does anyone seek elsewhere this charity and this light ; the church is the depository of the truth and the temple of love. Jesus Christ is in the midst of it, to enlighten it, sanctify it, and defend it. To be girt about with a golden girdle is always to be ready for labour and combat.—QUESNEL.

His girding signifieth His readiness to help His people.—E. LEIGH.

THE SEER'S COMMISSION

When I saw him, I fell at his feet as one dead. And he laid his right hand upon me, saying, Fear not; I am the first and the last, and the Living one; and I was dead, and behold, I am alive for evermore, and I have the keys of death and of Hades. Write therefore the things which thou sawest, and the things which are, and the things which shall come to pass hereafter; the mystery of the seven stars which thou sawest in my right hand, and the seven golden candlesticks. The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches: and the seven candlesticks are seven churches.

Rev. I. 17–20.

THIS vision is the natural introduction to all that follows, and indeed defines the main purpose of the whole book, inasmuch as it shows us Christ sustaining, directing, dwelling in his churches. We are thus led to expect that the remainder of the prophecy shall have the Church of Christ for its chief subject, and that the politics of the world, and the mutations of nations, shall come into view mainly in their bearing upon that.

A. MACLAREN.

Though John was in the Spirit when he had the vision of Christ, yet it made him fall at His feet as dead; and also turned Daniel's beauty into corruption, it was so glorious and so overweighing a glory that He appeared in. But we shall at the day of our resurrection be so furnished that we shall with the eagle be able to look upon the Sun in His strength.—BUNYAN.

"He that liveth" is the Living One; He whose life is the life complete in itself, and including all other lives within itself. Those fears which are shut in out of the eternities between the birth and the ascension, and that resurrection opening the prospect of that life which never was to end—these are the never-failing

interpretation to the man who believes in them of the temporal and eternal in his own experience. Christ comes and puts His essential life into our human form. He binds His life with ours so that they can never be separated. What He is, we must be; what we are, He must be for ever. Our earthly life, like His, becomes an episode, a short, special, temporary thing, when it is seen like His against an immortality.

P. Brooks.

If we consider the distance betwixt a star and a candlestick, we shall put both bishops and presbyteries out of the question. The epistles are addressed to the angels just as though they were addressed to the churches themselves. The angel receives praise and censure as the representative of the church. Again, he seems to be significant of the conscience of the church; the church's reformation and awakening were to proceed from him. Now both these points coincide in the idea of the personified character or life-picture of the church (to be distinguished from the church-spirit; comp. Acts xii. 15). It may indeed be objected that a symbol cannot be replaced by a symbol. But the ideal (in the sense of existing in idea, not in the sense of conforming to God's perfect idea) fundamental type of a church is a reality in heaven and in the sight of God, as well as in the church's own disposition, and every amendment of a church must start from a laying hold on this fundamental type. It also results from this address that the letters are not episcopal, but apocalyptic.—Lange.

Christendom, as represented by these seven churches, is the real audience to which the author addresses himself. His message is directed to all churches in all ages.—F. Godet.

THE MESSAGE TO EPHESUS

To the angel of the church in Ephesus write ; These things saith he that holdeth the seven stars in his right hand, he that walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks : I know thy works, and thy toil and patience, and that thou canst not bear evil men, and didst try them which call themselves apostles, and they are not, and didst find them false ; and thou hast patience and didst bear for my name's sake, and hast not grown weary. But I have this *against thee, that thou didst leave thy first love.*

Rev. II. 1–4.

EPHESUS, the chief city of Ionia, " Light of Asia," as the Ephesians themselves styled it, asserting in this style that primacy for Ephesus which Smyrna and Pergamos disputed with it, had now so far outstripped both its competitors that it was at once the civil and ecclesiastical centre of that " Asia " with which we have to do. Wealthy, prosperous, and magnificent, a meeting-place of oriental religions and Greek culture, and famous on many grounds in heathen antiquity. But Ephesus had better titles of honour than these. It was a city greatly favoured of God. Paul laboured there during three years ; Timothy, Aquila, Priscilla, Apollos, Tychicus, all contributed to build up the church in that city. John too had made it the chief seat of his ministry during the closing years of his protracted life. From a church to which so much was given much would be required.

R. C. TRENCH.

The Church of Ephesus had many marks which outwardly establish the claim to be a church of God. She had orthodoxy, for she had tried those that said they were apostles, and, having found them false, had put them from her ; she had the spirit of martyrdom ;

she had activity and zeal, and much of outward earnestness ; her patience and her labour were acknowledged ; yet there was one thing wanting : her emotions towards God had lost their strength and vividness, and therefore her Lord declared that He would not have the outward husk without the inward kernel. From which it is manifest that the flower is not merely valuable from being the precursor of the fruit, it has an inherent worth in itself ; and thus love has an inward grace and beauty, preciousness and value, in itself ; the act is dear to God simply because of the affection that has prompted it.—F. W. Robertson.

For naught's so sad the whole world o'er,
As much love which has once been more.

Coventry Patmore.

Oh stars of heaven that fade and flame,
Of whispering waves below !
Were earth, or heaven, or I the same,
A year, a year ago ?

The stars have kept their home on high,
The waves their wonted flow ;
The love is lost that once was I,
A year, a year ago.—F. W. H. Myers.

More perfect and more excellent is he who more sweetly and more joyfully burns in love. The diversity of love makes the diversity of holiness.

Richard Rolle.

Love is like a fine robe of many colours, which lends grace, beauty, freshness, not only to the white garment of faith and the green vesture of hope, but also to all the virtues ; for without love no virtue is pleasing in the sight of God.—St. John of the Cross.

THE MESSAGE TO SMYRNA

And to the angel of the church in Smyrna write; These things saith the first and the last, which was dead, and lived again *: I know thy tribulation, and thy poverty (but thou art rich), and the blasphemy of them which say they are Jews, and they are not, but are a synagogue of Satan. Fear not the things which thou art about to suffer: behold, the devil is about to cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days. Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee the crown of life. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the churches. He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death.*

Rev. II. 8–11.

SMYRNA—which alone of the seven cities flourishes to-day—is situated about fifty miles north of Ephesus, at the sea-end of another great trade-route. It disputed with Ephesus the commercial supremacy of Asia, had a large Jewish settlement, and was early the home of a Christian community, of which Polycarp was bishop until his martyrdom in A.D. 155.

C. A. SCOTT.

The term "synagogue" is confined to the Jews except in James ii. 2; and thus it represents here the Jewish antagonism to the Church. So "the throne of Satan" denotes the heathen antagonism; "the depths of Satan" denoting the heretical antagonism.—W. LEE.

Being addressed, as this epistle is, to the Church exposed, and hereafter to be still more exposed, to the fiercest blasts of persecution, it is graciously ordered that all the attributes which Christ here claims for Himself should be such as would encourage and support His servants in their trial and distress.—R. C. TRENCH.

Christ foreknows the future trials of His people,

forewarns them of them, and forearms against them. Forearms them, by His counsel; by showing them how their sufferings would be alleviated and limited—they should not be universal, they should not be perpetual, they should be to try them and not to destroy them—and by promising a glorious reward to their fidelity.—M. HENRY.

Active, stirring Christians are like to suffer much. Of Sardis and Laodicea only, we read not of any troubles they had.—J. TRAPP.

There never was saint so high caught up and illuminated, who first or last was not tempted. For he is not worthy of the high contemplation of God, who hath not been exercised with some tribulation for God's sake. Since temptation going before is wont to be a sign of ensuing comfort, unto those that are proved by temptations, heavenly comfort is promised. "He that shall overcome," saith He, "I will give him to eat of the Tree of Life."—THOMAS À KEMPIS.

We go from one hour to another, from one day and year to another, and what is once fairly passed in our doing and omitting and suffering is scarcely regarded by us any more; it is like water that has flowed away. But into the omniscience of Christ all things are taken up.—BENGEL.

The second death is the final condemnation which sinners undergo at the Judgment of God. The first death is, on the other hand, the natural one.—BOUSSET.

As many times as thou exercisest thyself calmly to reject vain thoughts, so many crowns will the Lord set upon thy heart.—MOLINOS.

What loves me, no word of mine shall e'er betray;
Though for faith unstained my life must forfeit pay.
EMILY BRONTË.

THE MESSAGE TO PERGAMUM

And to the angel of the church in Pergamum write; These things saith he that hath the sharp two-edged sword: I know where thou dwellest, even *where Satan's throne is: and thou holdest fast my name, and didst not deny my faith, even in the days of Antipas my witness, my faithful one, who was killed among you, where Satan dwelleth. But I have a few things against thee . . . To him that overcometh will I give of the hidden manna, and I will give him a white stone, and upon the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth but he that receiveth it.*

Rev. II. 12–14, 17.

PERGAMUM, in Mysia, on the Caicus, the most northerly of the Seven Churches, is styled by Pliny "by far the most illustrious city of Asia." It had been the chief seat of the kings of the family of Attalus, under whose dynasty it became a city of temples—Zeus, Athene, Apollo, Dionysus, Aphrodite, being the objects of worship. W. LEE.

The city was still officially the capital of the province, and especially it was recognised as the chief centre of the imperial worship, in which the unity and loyalty of the province was expressed. In this latter point lay the peculiar aggravation and abomination. It was the worship of the emperor that was recognised, when the Apocalypse was written, as the special foe of Christianity, as Antichrist, as Satan.—W. M. RAMSAY.

The Lord is not extreme to mark what is amiss in His weak but willing people.—J. TRAPP.

Moreover, if thou set not thy heart fixedly on Me, with a sincere wish to suffer all things for Me, thou wilt not be able to bear the heat of the combat, nor to attain the palm of the blessed. Thou oughtest there-

fore manfully to go through all and to use a strong hand against whatsoever withstandeth thee. For to him that overcometh is manna given, and for the indolent there remaineth much misery.—THOMAS À KEMPIS.

In this manna, there is unmistakably an allusion to the proper and heavenly food of the children of Israel, as contrasted with the unhallowed idol-offerings ; but beyond that, there is an allusion to our Lord's discourse in John vi., where He describes Himself as the true bread from heaven. Christ's gifts may all be summed up in the gift of Himself : on the other hand, He may describe any of the manifold properties of His own Person and office as a gift. This manna is hidden, in allusion partly perhaps to the fact of the pot of manna laid up in the ark in the holy of holies : but principally to the fact that our spiritual life, with its springs and nourishments, is hidden with Christ in God.—H. ALFORD.

Wouldst thou know what kind of a new name thou wilt receive ? Overcome ! Before that thou askest in vain ; and after that thou wilt soon read the name written on the white stone.—BENGEL.

Be diligent in self-reflection : read over thine evidences. Be diligent in prayer : the white stone is given to none but a conqueror. Be diligent and frequent in communion with thy God : conversing with God puts a lustre and radiancy upon the soul.

E. CULVERWELL.

The " white stone " is not a scriptural symbol, of the use of which we can judge by analogy ; but it is not unusual in the Classics, where the white stone intimates the festal day, or acquittal in judgment, or election to victory. It may, like the " crown of victory " afterwards, be from thence adopted for a sacred symbol.—I. WILLIAMS.

THE MESSAGE TO THYATIRA

And to the angel of the church in Thyatira write; These things saith the Son of God, who hath his eyes like a flame of fire, and his feet are like unto burnished brass: I know thy works, and thy love and faith and ministry and patience, and that thy last works are more than the first. But I have this *against thee, that thou sufferest the woman Jezebel, which calleth herself a prophetess . . . Howbeit that which ye have, hold fast till I come. . . . and I will give him the morning star.*

Rev. II. 18–20, 25, 28.

THYATIRA, a city of no first-rate dignity, was a Macedonian colony; and it may be looked at as a slight and unintentional confirmation, in a minute particular, of the veracity of the Acts, that Lydia, a purple-seller of Thyatira, is met in the Macedonian city of Philippi, this being precisely what was likely to happen from the close and frequent intercourse maintained between a mother city and its daughter colonies.

R. C. TRENCH.

The prophets and prophetesses were, at the time when the letters before us were written, still in part at least the foremost authorities in the congregations. There is, therefore, nothing startling in finding here also a prophetess playing a part in a sect of false teachers. It is, however, worthy of note that just here in Thyatira—which later on became probably one of the chief centres of Montanism—false prophetism had to be attacked.

W. BOUSSET.

However we may explain "the depths of Satan," the emphasis lies on the word "*depths*." There is first, the "synagogue of Satan" in Smyrna; secondly, "the throne of Satan" in Pergamum; thirdly here, the anti-Christian perversion, which had arisen from

these " deep things," or " depths," as a doctrine and a power.—W. LEE.

" I will give him the morning star." In the last chapter of the book we read, " I " Jesus " am the root and offspring of David, and the bright and morning star." The words before us are, therefore, " I will give *Myself* to him." But Myself especially in one character ; as the light of life ; as the light which springs up in the morning after a long night of gloom and storm ; as the joy and comfort of the weary watcher, the compensation for long waiting, and the prize of long struggling. It is not wholly unlike the words of Peter with reference to the prophetic word : " Whereunto ye do well if ye give heed, as to a lamp giving light in a murky place, until day dawn and the day-star arise in your hearts." The promise is that that day shall dawn, that that day-star shall at last rise upon our hearts.—J. VAUGHAN.

It is observable that it is not said that He would *make* him *like* the morning-star, as in Dan. xii. 3, nor that he would be compared with the morning-star, like the king of Babylon, Isa. xiv. 12 ; nor that he would resemble a star which Balaam says he saw in the far distant future, Num. xxiv. 17. The idea seems to be, that the Saviour would give him something that would resemble that morning planet in beauty and splendour —perhaps meaning that it would be placed as a gem in his diadem and would sparkle on his brow—bearing some such relation to Him who is called " the Sun of Righteousness," as the morning-star does to the glorious sun on his rising.—A. BARNES.

Christ is the Morning-star ; He brings day with Him into the soul ; the light of grace and of glory.

M. HENRY.

THE MESSAGE TO SARDIS

And to the angel of the church in Sardis write ; These things saith he that hath the seven Spirits of God, and the seven stars : I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and thou art dead. . . . He that overcometh shall thus be arrayed in white garments ; and I will in no wise blot his name out of the book of life.

Rev. III. 1, 5.

IT is a very instructive fact, that everywhere else in the epistles to all the churches, save only to this and to Laodicea, there is mention of some burden to be borne, of a conflict either with foes within the Church or without, or with both. Only in these two nothing of the kind occurs. The exceptions are very significant. There is no need to assume that the church at Sardis had openly coalesced and joined hands with the heathen world ; this would in those days have been impossible ; nor yet that it had renounced the *appearance* of opposition to the world. But the two tacitly understood one another. This church had nothing of the spirit of the Two Witnesses, of whom we read that they " *tormented* them that dwelt on the earth " (Rev. xi. 10), tormented them, that is, by their witness for a God of truth and holiness and love, whom the dwellers on the earth were determined not to know. . . . The world could endure it because it too was a world.—R. C. TRENCH.

The seven spirits which are before God's throne—the plenitude of the Godhead in its attributes and energies—Christ the Lord of the Church possesses, is clothed and invested with in all fullness. From Him the spiritual life of His churches comes as its source, in all its elements of vitality. He searches all the depths both of our depravity and of His own applications

of grace. He has in His hand all the Spirit's power of conviction. He wields the fire of purification and the fire of destruction. Whether the Spirit informs, or rebukes, or warns, or comforts, or promises, whether He softens or hardens men's hearts, it is Christ who, searching the hearts as Son of God, and feeling their feelings as Son of Man, wields and applies the one and manifold Spirit.—H. ALFORD.

The " book of life," wherein names are said to be written, and from thence blotted out sometimes, is here used by analogy with registers in cities containing the names of all citizens, and from which rebels and deserters were blotted out. See ch. xiii. 8 and ch. xx. 12, where this book of life is distinguished from the books which were the records of what was done, out of which it seems the records are brought, by which the wicked are judged " according to their wicked works," which are there recorded.—H. HAMMOND.

O Lord, cheerfully will I suffer for Thy sake, whatever Thou shalt will to come upon me. From Thy hand I am willing to receive indifferently good and evil, sweet and bitter, joy and sorrow, and for all that befalleth me to give Thee thanks. Keep me safe from all sin, and I shall fear neither death nor hell. So as Thou cast me not from Thee for ever, nor blot me out of the book of life, whatever tribulation may come upon me shall not hurt me.—THOMAS À KEMPIS.

It argues carelessness and neglective indifferency to be unresolved, undetermined, in matters of any weight in religion. Awaken intellectual faculties, search, consider, examine the principles of God's creation.—B. WHICHCOTE.

As the body without the soul is dead, so is the soul dead without God.—AUGUSTINE.

THE MESSAGE TO PHILADELPHIA

And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write ; These things saith he that is holy, he that is true, he that hath the key of David, he that openeth, and none shall shut, and that shutteth, and none openeth. . . . He that overcometh, I will make him a pillar in the temple of my God.
Rev. III. 7, 12.

THE town of Philadelphia derived its name from Attalus Philadelphus, the king of Pergamos, who died 138 B.C. It was situated on the slopes of Mount Tmolus, in the midst of a district the soil of which was favourable to the cultivation of the vine. On the coins of the town are to be found the head of Bacchus. The town was built of high ground—upwards of 900 feet above sea-level. The whole region, however, was volcanic, and few cities suffered more from earthquakes ; the frequent recurrence of these considerably reduced the population. But its favourable situation and fertile soil preserved it from entire destruction. And of all the seven churches it had the longest life as a Christian city.

W. Boyd Carpenter.

In the loss of Ephesus the Christians deplored the fall of the first angel, the extinction of the first candlestick, of the Revelation ; the desolation is complete ; and the temple of Diana or the church of Mary will equally elude the search of the curious traveller. The circus and three stately theatres of Laodicea are now peopled with wolves and foxes ; Sardis is reduced to a miserable village ; the God of Mahomet, without a rival or a son, is invoked in the mosques of Thyatira and Pergamus, and the populousness of Smyrna is supported by the foreign trade of the Franks and Armenians. Philadelphia alone has been saved by

prophecy, or courage. At a distance from the sea, forgotten by the emperors, encompassed on all sides by the Turks, her valiant citizens defended their religion and freedom above fourscore years, and at length capitulated with the proudest of the Ottomans. Among the Greek colonies and churches of Asia, Philadelphia is still erect—a column in a scene of ruins—a pleasing example that the paths of honour and safety may sometimes be the same.—E. GIBBON.

This appeal to the faithful church in Philadelphia is throughout exquisitely beautiful in the keeping of the figures and analogies : of the door—and the temple —and the pillar—and the key of David. But the symbol which is brought to bear upon it appears with an expressive and appropriate change in the language ; for in the description before, to which it refers in the symbolic vision, Christ " bears the keys of hell and of death " ; here as having " the key of David," in allusion perhaps to the trial of that church from Judaism ; and as intimating that to Him, as the true Son of David, is this kingdom given, that those, the keys of death and of hell, are no other than the key of David, of which the prophet had spoken in his description of what forms the outline of this vision (Isa. xxii. 22). It is this figure which is carried on throughout—of the pillar and the temple, and the New Jerusalem. All things are become new ; the Israel of old is lost in the true Israel of God ; Christ Himself bears the key—the key of the Temple of David and Solomon ; the one true fold, the household of God, as Himself God and Man.—I. WILLIAMS.

The one who keeps God's word is kept. Such is the *benigna talio* of the Kingdom of God.

R. C. TRENCH.

Slowly, through all the universe, the temple of God is being built. Wherever, in any world, a soul by free-willed obedience catches the fire of God's likeness, it is set into the growing walls, a living stone. When in your hard fight, in your tiresome drudgery, or in your terrible temptation, you catch the purpose of your being, and give yourself to God, and so give Him the chance to give Himself to you, your life, a living stone, is taken up and set into that growing wall. In what strange quarries and stone-yards the stones for that celestial wall are being hewn! Out of the hill-sides of humiliated pride; deep in the darkness of crushed despair; in the fretting and dusty atmosphere of little cares; in the hard, cruel contacts that man has with man; wherever souls are being tried and ripened, in whatever commonplace and homely way—there God is hewing out the pillars for His temple.—P. BROOKS.

It is a little striking, as a mere coincidence, that travellers describe, among the few ruins of Philadelphia at this day, four strong marble pillars standing in one spot, which once supported the dome of a church, and on the sides of these pillars inscriptions. It is added, "One solitary pillar of high antiquity has been often noticed, as reminding beholders of the remarkable words in the Apocalyptic message to the Philadelphian Church, him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God."—C. J. VAUGHAN.

The imagery of the Church militant is transferred to the Church triumphant, but with this difference, that the saints are no longer the stones merely, but now the pillars themselves, standing in their immovable firmness.

H. ALFORD.

A little grace well improved may do great matters, and set heaven open to a soul.—J. TRAPP.

THE MESSAGE TO LAODICEA

And to the angel of the church in Laodicea write; These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God: I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. So because thou art lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spew thee out of my mouth. . . . Behold, I stand at the door and knock: if any man hear my voice and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me. He that overcometh, I will give to him to sit down with me on my throne, as I also overcame and sat down with my Father in his throne.

Rev. III. 14–16, 20–21.

LAODICEA was a small city until after the Roman period had begun; then it rapidly became great and rich. Destroyed by an earthquake in A.D. 60, it disdained to seek help from the liberality of the emperor as many of the greatest cities of Asia had done. Hence its boast, "I am rich and have gotten riches, and have need of nothing." It was renowned for the beautiful glossy black wool of its sheep, and carried on a great trade in garments manufactured from this wool. Owing to its central position at a point where the great trade-route from the East was joined by several branch roads. . . . it became a centre of banking and financial transactions. Hence, Rev. iii. 18, "I counsel thee (not to take gold of thy bankers, but) to buy of me gold refined by fire, and (not the glossy black garments made in the city, but) white garments."—W. M. RAMSAY.

The name of this primitive apostolic church passes wholly out of sight. The Turkish conquest pressed with more than common severity on these districts. When the day of visitation came, the church

was taken by surprise. . . . The long-impending doom overtook her, and the golden candlestick was removed for ever from the Eternal Presence.—J. LIGHTFOOT.

The peculiar use of the similitude of physical cold and heat here makes it necessary to interpret the former of the two somewhat differently from its common acceptation : so that while " hot " keeps its meaning of *fervent*—warm, and earnest in the life of faith and love—" cold " cannot mean here " dead and cold," as we say of the careless and listless professor of religion : for this is just what these Laodiceans were, and what is expressed by the " lukewarm " below. So that we must, so to speak, go further into coldness for " cold," and take it as meaning, not only entirely without the spark of spiritual life, but also and chiefly, by consequence, openly belonging to the world without, and having no part nor lot in Christ's Church, and actively opposed to it. This, as well as the opposite state of spiritual fervour, would be an intelligible and plainly marked condition : at all events, free from that danger of mixed motive and disregarded principle which belongs to the lukewarm state, inasmuch as a man in earnest, be he right or wrong, is ever a better man than one professing what he does not feel.—H. ALFORD.

This wretched doom they bear,
The sorrow-smitten souls of those whose name
Nor foul reproach nor glorious praise did share.
Mingled are they with those of evil fame,
The angels who nor rebels were, nor true
To God, but dwelt in isolated shame.
Heaven fearing loss of beauty, spurned that crew ;
Nor were they harboured in the depths of Hell,
Lest to the damned some glory might accrue.

DANTE.

Why should a man repent of his goodness? He may well repent, indeed, of his falsehood; but unhappily the falsehood of it is just the thing he does not see, and which he cannot see by the very law of his character. The Pharisee did not know he *was* a Pharisee. If he had known it he would not have been a Pharisee. The victim of passion, then, may be converted—the gay, the thoughtless, or the ambitious; he whom human glory has intoxicated; he whom the show of life has ensnared; he whom the pleasures of sense have captivated—they may be converted any one of these; but who is to convert the hypocrite? He does not know he is a hypocrite; he cannot upon the very basis of his character; he must think himself sincere; and the more he is in the shackles of his own character, i.e. the greater hypocrite he is, the more sincere he must think himself.—J. MOZLEY.

The imagery of the Apocalypse is here wonderfully sustained in every verse and every expression; the strength, the variety, the rapid transition in the figurative language, is quite peculiar; and every image contains a parable. If thou wouldst be rich, obtain the true gold for the false that perishes: if thou wouldst be brightly apparelled, obtain the white garment of immortality; lest thou be "found naked" in that debasement of thy fallen nature which the appliances of wealth in vain would hide. If thou wouldst have thine eyes opened, come to Him that "anointed" the eyes of the born blind.—I. WILLIAMS.

Without constraint is My presence; at the door of the heart I knock, and rejoice together with them that open for their own salvation. For I account this a supper; nourished with what nourisheth them.

ECUMENIUS.

A VISION OF HEAVENLY VERITIES

THE MAJESTY OF THE CREATOR

And when the living creatures shall give glory and honour and thanks to him that sitteth on the throne, to him that liveth for ever and ever, the four and twenty elders shall fall down before him that sitteth on the throne, and shall worship him that liveth for ever and ever, and shall cast their crowns before the throne, saying, Worthy art thou, our Lord and our God, to receive the glory and the honour and the power: for thou didst create all things, and because of thy will they were, and were created.

Rev. IV. 9–11.

IN the song of praise put into the mouths of the "living creatures" they have not yet advanced to the thought of salvation. That is reserved for the next chapter. Here they think of creation and all its wonders: of the heavens which declare God's glory, and the firmament which shows forth His handiwork: of sun and moon and stars in their manifold and resplendent glories; of the mountains and the valleys; of the rivers and fountains of waters; of the rich exuberance of vegetable life which covers the earth with a gorgeous carpet of every hue; and of those animals upon its surface which "run races in their mirth": and for them they praise. In Him they live and move and have their being. Because of His will they *were*—let the reading be considered and remembered: "were," not "are"—because of His will they were in His idea from all eternity; and when the appointed moment came they *were created*. Wherefore let them praise.—W. MILLIGAN.

They cast their crowns, the emblems of their borrowed and derived glories, before the throne, the seat of infinite and eternal majesty.—J. PEARSON.

The whole of this glorious vision is of a composite and twofold nature: comfort is mingled with terror, the fire of love with the fire of judgment.—H. ALFORD.

The throne of God is supported by four *living creatures* and twenty-four *elders* fall down before it. These are the representatives of *Nature* and of the *Church*. The former represent the forces of nature, which, in ancient religions, sat upon the throne, personified in the pagan deities, but which, in the monotheism of the Bible, play a more modest part, and are employed in bearing up the throne of God—that is to say, in establishing His kingdom. They are represented by the four living creatures which are supposed to be the *chefs d'œuvre* of the animate creation—the lion, the bull, the eagle, and the man. The twenty-four elders represent the Judæo-Christian and the Gentile Church, twelve for each of these two moieties of the primitive Church, in conformity with the types of the twelve patriarchs, the twelve tribes, and the twelve apostles.—F. GODET.

He sees a throne in heaven and one sitting on it, bright and pure as richest precious stone; and round His throne a rainbow like an emerald, the sign to us of hope and faithfulness, mercy and truth, which He Himself appointed to comfort the fearful hearts of men. Around Him are angels crowned; men like ourselves, but men who have fought the good fight, and conquered, and are now at rest; pure, as their white garments tell us; and victorious, as their crowns tell us. And from the throne came thunderings, and lightnings, and voices, as they did when he spoke to the Jews of old—signs of His terrible power as judge, and lawgiver, and avenger of all the wrong which is done on earth. And there are there, too, seven burning lamps—the seven

spirits of God which give light and life to all created things, and most of all to righteous hearts. And before the throne is a sea of glass, the same sea which John saw in another vision, with us human beings standing on it; the sea of time, and space, and mortal life, on which we all have our little day. It seems to us to be a great thing now—time, and space, and the world; and yet it looked small enough to John as it lies in heaven before the throne of Christ, and he passes it by in a few words. For what are all suns and stars, and what are all ages and generations, and millions and millions of years, compared with eternity, with God's eternal heaven, and God whom not even heaven can contain?—C. KINGSLEY.

The brightness and magnificence of this world, which by reason of its height and greatness is hidden from men, is Divine and Wonderful. It addeth much to the Glory of the Temple in which we live. Yet it is the cause why men understood it not. They think it too great and wide to be enjoyed. But since it is all filled with the Majesty of His Glory who dwelleth in it; and the Goodness of the Lord filleth the World, and His Wisdom shineth everywhere within it and about it; and it aboundeth in an infinite variety of services; we need nothing but open eyes, to be ravished like the Cherubim. Well may we bear the greatness of the World, since it is our storehouse and treasury. That our treasures should be endless is an happy inconvenience: that all regions should be full of Joys: and the room infinite wherein they are seated.

T. TRAHERNE.

Creation is the foundation of all the other works of God, and therefore it is the ground also of all the thanksgiving which arises from His creatures.—BENGEL.

THE DIVINE DECREES

I saw in the right hand of him that sat on the throne a book written within and on the back, close sealed with seven seals. And I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a great voice, Who is worthy to open the book, and to loose the seals thereof? And no one in the heaven, or on the earth, or under the earth, was able to open the book, or to look thereon.

Rev. V. 1–3.

IT is, in the main, my own view that the book represents the counsel and predetermination of the Divine Providence. We may observe, that it is in fact but a limitation of this meaning, when many understand the book to contain the prophetic fortunes of the Church of Christ: but also that it is a limitation which has arisen from the mistake of confounding the opening of the seals with the reading of the book. Those successive openings, or if we will, the fortunes and periods of the Church and world, are but so many preparations for that final state of perfection in which the Lamb shall reveal to the Church the contents of the book itself.

H. ALFORD.

It was sealed to show that the decrees of God are inscrutable. . . . We are to conceive of this book as consisting of seven rolls, so that the opening of one seal only laid open the contents of one roll.—T. NEWTON.

It is the book which unfolds the principles of God's government—in a wide sense the book of salvation (cf. Rom. xvi. 25, 26)—the interpretation of life which Christ alone can bestow. God's purposes are dark until Christ illuminates them.—W. BOYD CARPENTER.

The *seal* is the symbol of an event still hidden in mystery, but divinely decreed; and this image is borrowed from Isa. xxix. 11, 12.—W. LEE.

THE MIGHT OF REDEMPTIVE SACRIFICE

And I saw in the midst of the throne and of the four living creatures, and in the midst of the elders, a Lamb standing, as though it had been slain, having seven horns, and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God, sent forth into all the earth.

Rev. V. 6.

THE horn is the well-known emblem of might: the perfect number *seven* represents that "all power is given unto Him in heaven and earth"; and the seven eyes represent the watchful active operation of God's Spirit poured forth through the death and by the victory of the Lamb, upon all flesh and all creation. As the seven burning lamps before the throne represented the Spirit of God immanent in the Godhead, so the seven eyes of the Lamb represent the same Spirit in his sevenfold perfection, profluent, so to speak, from the Incarnate Redeemer: busied in His world-wide energy: the very words "sent forth" reminding us of the *apostolic* work and church.

H. ALFORD.

We make a very wide and very impressive stage of advance in our apprehensions of the essential supremacy of the Lamb, when we discover that our notions of the governmental order of the world, or what we call providence, are becoming, and will hereafter seem to be, more and more graciously mitigated. Having now the Lamb in the throne, we are to have no more a merely punitive and dry absolutism; our Providence will be a true Lamb-Providence. I mean by this a complete world-government working in the interest, fulfilling the counsel, and dispensing even judgment, in the feeling of the Lamb.—H. BUSHNELL.

The Lamb is here represented as *standing*, as

having been *slain* (cf. Isa. liii. 7; Jer. xii. 19). Although Christ was *slain*, yet He *stands*. He was not *overthrown*. On the contrary, by *falling* He *stood*.

Bp. Wordsworth.

John heard of a Lion, and saw a Lamb: the Lamb opened the Book and appeared a Lion.—Bernard.

He looked to see a Lion, and beheld a Lamb. He looked to see power and force, whereby the foes of his faith should be destroyed, and he saw love and gentleness by which they should be conquered by being transformed into friends. The might of Christ is the power of love. The Lamb, as though it had been slain, stands in the midst of God's throne. At the heart of God's sovereignty is sacrificial and suffering love.—G. B. Stevens.

Every precept of Christianity is quickened by the power of the death and resurrection of Christ. It is by the presence of this power that they are Christians, and it is as Christians that they conquer the world.

B. F. Westcott.

The new song is for Christ slain, and the cleansing of the world. It is for them that are released from the oldness of the written Law, and walk in newness of life, out of all the earth enlightened, and taught by the Spirit songs of thanksgiving.—Aretas.

It is only in the omnipotence of all-suffering love that the greatness of omnipotence could be proved.

Ebrard.

The prophecies of the Old Testament describing the Messiah, sometimes as a despised sufferer, sometimes as an irresistible and triumphant conqueror, appeared dark and irreconcileable, until the event shewed the truth and consistency of both predictions.

Dean Woodhouse.

THE SEVEN SEALS OF DESTINY

THE FIRST FOUR SEALS BROKEN

I saw when the Lamb opened one of the seven seals.
Rev. VI. 1.

THE Lamb, alone found worthy, opens, one after another, the seals of the closed book or roll, so that when they are all opened, it may be unrolled and read. One point should be urged, which is very commonly passed over: viz. that the roll is never during the prophecy actually opened, nor is any part of it read. The openings of its successive seals are but the successive preparations for its contents to be disclosed: and as each is opened, a new class of preparations is seen in prophetic vision. When the seventh is loosed, and all is ready for the unfolding and reading, there is a symbolic silence, and a new series of visions begins.—H. ALFORD.

The opening of each separate seal is not the opening of a portion of the roll, but a necessary preliminary to the opening of the entire roll. What the prophet sees, as each particular seal is broken, is not something in the roll itself, but something which occurs on the stage of vision at the moment when that step is taken toward the unfolding of God's counsels. In the case of the first four seals, the act of breaking is followed by a loud utterance from one of the four living beings which represent the universe of animated creation. The vision which is thus introduced affects creation in some one of its great departments.—C. J. VAUGHAN.

i. *The Rider on the White Horse—Invasion*

The bowman sitting on a white horse, to whom a crown was given, is the Parthian King. . . . The Parthian weapon was the bow; the bowmen were all

horsemen ; and they could use the bow as well when they were fleeing as when they were charging. . . . White had been the sacred colour among the old Persians, for whom the Parthians stood in later times ; and sacred white horses accompanied every Persian army.—W. M. Ramsay.

The first rider represents conquest. The embodiment of evil force was, for this writer, the Roman Empire, in all its extent and in all the manifestations of its power. Against this he predicts judgment in the coming of a conquering nation whose advent would be at least to the Roman dominion a judgment.

C. A. Scott.

ii. *The Rider on the Red Horse—War*

These visions proceed in the very order in which our Lord has Himself spoken of them—" Ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars . . . and there shall be famines and pestilences. All these are the beginning of sorrows." The horse is red, or fiery-red, as intimating bloodshed and war ; the colour of the war-horse in Zechariah, and of the red Dragon afterwards (ch. xii. 3). And the meaning is here explained, for the rider is commissioned to " take peace from the earth."—I. Williams.

I need not say how wildly that horse was plunging in the days after the death of Nero, and before the establishment of Vespasian.—F. D. Maurice.

iii. *The Rider on the Black Horse—Famine*

The rider on the black horse, symbolising Famine, is limited in his desolating action by the command given, that enough is to be reserved for sustenance.

Wheat, barley, oil, and wine formed the ordinary sources of nourishment. It is the mercy of God tempering His judgments. By this third seal we learn that famine, the pressure of want on men, not sweeping them away by utter failure of the means of subsistence, but keeping them far below the ordinary standard of comfort, and especially those who depend on their daily labour, will be one of the four judgments by which the way of the Lord's coming will be opened.
H. ALFORD.

The rider holds a pair of balances in his hand, with which he measures out to men their daily portion of wheat and barley.—F. GODET.

iv. *The Rider on the Pale Horse—Pestilence*

The colour pallid, or livid, is that deadly greenish hue, which is the unmistakable token of the approach of death. The rider is Death—not a particular form of death, but Death himself. Attending him, ready to gather up the slain, is Hades. The fourth seal is the darkest and most terrible. Single forms of death (war and famine) were revealed in the earlier seals; now the great King of Terrors himself appears, and in his hand are gathered all forms of death—war, famine, pestilence (for the second time the word "death" is used: it must be taken in a subordinate sense, as a particular form of death, such as plague or pestilence), and wild beasts. These forms of death correspond with God's four sore judgments—the sword, and famine, and pestilence, and the noisome beasts of Ezek. xiv. 21. The seal, therefore, gathers up into one all the awfulness of the past seals. It is the central seal, and it is the darkest.—W. LEE.

THE FIFTH SEAL BROKEN

And when he opened the fifth seal, I saw underneath the altar the souls of them that had been slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held: and they cried with a great voice, saying, How long, O Master, the holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth? And there was given them to each one a white robe; and it was said unto them, that they should rest yet for a little time, until their fellow-servants also and their brethren, which should be killed even as they were, should be fulfilled.

Rev. VI. 9–11.

THE Church has been following her Lord. As the vision of Bethlehem and the angel-song of "peace on earth" passed and made way for the agony of Gethsemane, the cross of Calvary, and the cry, "My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" so the glowing dream of a quick conquest over all evil passes away, and the picture of an agonising, persecuted Church takes its place, and the voice of its anguish is heard, "How long, O Lord!" The Church has her Bethlehem, her Nazareth, her Gethsemane, her Calvary, her Easter morn; for Christ said, "Where I am, there shall also My servant be." The seals . . . are tokens that the victory of Christ's Church must, like her Lord's, be a victory through apparent failure and certain death. . . . The Fifth Seal shows her suffering, the witness of the servants of Christ has been rejected; through the world they have tribulation.

W. Boyd Carpenter.

We know, whatever be the bliss of the departed martyrs and confessors, that they are waiting for the coming of the Lord, without which they are not perfect; and in the holy fire of their purified zeal, they look forward to that day as one of righteous judgment on the

ungodly world. The representation here, in which they are seen under the altar, is simply symbolical, carrying out the likening of them to victims slain on an altar. . . . The " white robe " is the vestment of acknowledged and glorified righteousness in which the saints will walk and reign with Christ. This was given to the martyrs : but their prayer for vengeance was not yet granted. The Seer saw in vision that this was so. The white robe was not actually bestowed as some additional boon, but seemed in vision to be thus bestowed, because in that vision one side only of the martyrs' intermediate state had been presented, viz. the fact of their slaughter and their collective cry for vengeance. Now as over against that the other more glorious side is presented, viz. that though the collective cry for vengeance is not yet answered, yet individually they are blessed in glory with Christ, and waiting for their fellows to be fully complete.—H. ALFORD.

Rest awhile,
Children of wretchedness ! more groans must rise,
More blood must stream, or ere your wrongs be full.
Yet is the day of retribution nigh :
The Lamb of God hath opened the fifth seal :
And upward rush on swiftest wings of fire
The innumerable multitude of wrongs
By man on man inflicted.—COLERIDGE.

The wine-cup at the altar is
As Christ's own blood indeed, and as the blood
Of Christ's elect, at divers seasons spilt
On the altar-stone, that to man's church, for this,
Shall prove a stone of stumbling—whence it stood
To be rent up ere the true Church be built.
D. G. ROSSETTI.

THE SIXTH SEAL BROKEN

And I saw when he opened the sixth seal, and there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the whole moon became as blood; and the stars of the heaven fell unto the earth, as a fig tree casteth her unripe figs, when she is shaken of a great wind.

Rev. VI. 12, 13.

HIGHLY coloured as the language used under the sixth seal may appear to us, to the Jew animated by the spirit of the Old Testament it was simply that in which he had been accustomed to express his expectation of any new dispensation of the Almighty, of any striking crisis in the history of the world. Whenever he thought of the Judge of all the earth as manifesting Himself in a greater than ordinary degree, and as manifesting Himself in that truth and righteousness which was the glorious distinction of His character, he took advantage of such figures as we have before us here. To the fall of Jerusalem, therefore to every great crisis in human history, and to the close of all they may be fittingly applied.—W. MILLIGAN.

These words tell of a far end, not for ever to be postponed, for time itself and for the world; predict a destruction which shall befall each enemy of the truth, and predict a destruction which shall befall the enemy himself whom each in turn has represented and served; reveal the moving Hand above, and disclose, from behind the cloud which conceals it, the clear, definite purpose and the unchanging, loving Will. Thus understood, each separate downfall of evil becomes a prophecy of the next, and of the last; and the partial fulfilment a new warrant for the Church's expectation of the day of judgment.—C. J. VAUGHAN.

THE SECURITY OF GOD'S ISRAEL

After this I saw four angels standing at the four corners of the earth, holding the four winds of the earth, that no wind should blow on the earth, or on the sea, or upon any tree. And I saw another angel ascend from the sunrising, having the seal of the living God: and he cried with a great voice to the four angels, to whom it was given to hurt the earth and the sea, saying, Hurt not the earth, neither the sea, nor the trees, till we shall have sealed the servants of our God on their foreheads.

Rev. VII. 1-3.

THE command to restrain the four destroying winds till the children of God are sealed, is the description of what is fulfilled in all Scriptural types; Noah out of the world; Lot out of Sodom; Israel out of Egypt; and, again, captive Israel out of Babylon; and, at last, the children of God out of the mystic Babylon, before the approaching destruction takes place. . . . There is also another reason for the sealing of the twelve tribes being here introduced in connection with the next seal. Throughout the Apocalypse Israel is never to be lost sight of, the Jerusalem of the Old Testament unfolds itself into the New; and the "Jerusalem from above" is contained throughout the old as much as in the new dispensation. Ancient Israel is the type and figure throughout; or rather it is the very germ, containing in hidden outline that which is to be developed in life. This vision, then, may describe the saints here on earth sealed by the Spirit of God, and prepared by His grace to abide faithful in these conflicts.—I. WILLIAMS.

So Famine waits, and War, with greedy eyes,
Till some repenting heart be ready for the skies.

J. KEBLE.

THE GLORY OF THE REDEEMED

After these things I saw, and behold, a great multitude, which no man could number, out of every nation, and of all *tribes and peoples and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, arrayed in white robes, and palms in their hands.*

Rev. VII. 9.

IT is quite true that the palm was for the Greek and Roman a token of victory, but this "palmiferous company," to use Henry More's words, these happy palmers, do not stand before the throne as conquerors, but as those who keep the true Feast of Tabernacles, the Feast of Rest, of all the weary toil in the wilderness accomplished and ended. As such, and to mark them for what they are, they bear, according to the injunctions of the Old Testament, the branches of palms in their hands (Lev. xxiii. 40).—R. C. TRENCH.

They have worshipped, and so are blest. They have hungered and thirsted after righteousness, and now they are filled. They have longed for, toiled for, it may be died for, the true, the beautiful, and the good; and now they can gaze upward at the perfect reality of that which they saw on earth, only as in a glass darkly, dimly, and afar; and can contemplate the utterly free, the utterly beautiful, and the utterly good in the character of God and the face of Jesus Christ. They entered while on earth into the mystery and glory of self-sacrifice; and now they find their bliss in gazing on the one perfect and eternal sacrifice, and rejoicing in the thought that it is the cause and ground of the whole universe, even the Lamb slain before the foundation of the world.—C. KINGSLEY.

What a brave encouragement is it for one that is come for grace to the throne of grace, to see so great a

number already there on their seats, in their robes, with their palms in their hands and their crowns upon their heads, singing of salvation to God and the Lamb! And I say again—and speak now to the dejected—methinks it would be strange, oh, thou that art so afraid that the greatness of thy sins will be a bar unto thee, if among all this great number of pipers and harpers that are got to glory, thou canst not espy one that, when here, was as vile a sinner as thyself. Look, man; they are there for thee to view them, and for thee to take encouragement to hope, when thou shalt consider what grace and mercy have done for them. Behold, tempted soul; dost thou not yet see what a throne of grace here is, and what multitudes are already arrived thither, to give thanks unto His name that sits thereon, and to the Lamb for ever and ever? And wilt thou hang thy harp upon the willows, and go drooping up and down the world, as if there was no God, no grace, no throne of grace, to apply thyself unto for mercy and grace to help in time of need? Hark; dost thou not hear them what they say? "Worthy," say they, "is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing." And this is written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope; and that the drooping ones might come boldly to the throne of grace, to obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.—BUNYAN.

You must not stand alone. All this is strength for you. Come in among these best souls that believe in and are finding God. I lift the words above all low formality that clings to them, and say, Come, join the Church. Not in mere outward act, but in true inward fellowship. Stand boldly with those who are trying to

work for God, and willing to suffer for God here ; and then in the perfect communion of the saints, you shall stand at last among that great multitude which no man can number, who out of all nations and kindreds and people and tongues shall stand before the throne and before the Lamb, clad with white robes, and with palms in their hands, crying with a loud voice, " Salvation to our God, and to the Lamb."—P. BROOKS.

They sing salvation to God with a loud voice, who recollect with great thankfulness, that they have overcome in tribulation not by their own virtue, but by His aid.—AUGUSTINE.

Much is said by sacred interpreters in dwelling on expressions so wonderfully touching and beautiful ; but this image of the Blessed is like a Divine mirror ; it is dimmed or tarnished by human words of comment.

I. WILLIAMS.

Silent was I, yet desire
Was painted in my looks ; and thus I spake
My wish more earnestly than language could.

DANTE.

There's a perpetual spring, perpetual youth :
No joint-benumbing cold, or scorching heat,
Famine, nor age, have any being there.
Forget, for shame, your Tempe ; bury in
Oblivion your feigned Hesperian orchards :
The golden fruit kept by the watchful dragon,
Which did require a Hercules to get it,
Compared with what grows in all plenty there,
Deserves not to be named. The Power I serve
Laughs at your happy Araby, or the
Elysian shades ; for He hath made His bowers
Better in deed than you can fancy yours.

MASSINGER.

THE SEVENTH SEAL BROKEN

And when he opened the seventh seal, there followed a silence in heaven about the space of half an hour.
Rev. VIII. 1.

WHEN the seventh seal is opened there is no immediate action. That which follows is generally felt to be the most dramatic touch in the whole book—" There was silence in heaven about the space of half an hour." The interpretation of that silence is not difficult. Up to this point the record is of normal events, tragic, indeed, but not without ample precedent in history ; and events which, though future at the first moment of vision, are past at the hour of writing. But now all the spectators in heaven feel that a door has been opened through which they approach a long vista of strange and momentous crises, such as have never been known before. They stand still, as it were, and hold their breath while they try to penetrate the meaning of what they dimly divine. It is thus that the Seer marks the boundary between history and prophecy. That majestic silence is rather emphasised than broken by a single movement. While all else is still, an angel approaches the altar and pours upon it the incense which lends acceptability to the prayers of the saints below. Silently the smoke carries up the prayers before the throne of God. Not silent is the answer ; for when the mystic half-hour expires, the same angel takes fire from the altar and casts it down upon the earth, as a token that the prayers are heard. Then follow thunders and noises and lightnings and earthquake, fit prelude to the new and awful drama which is about to be enacted.—M. G. GLAZEBROOK.

Here we have an instance of a purely Jewish belief

still lingering in the Christian mind despite the fact that Christ had been revealed as the great Intercessor. But the truth of abiding validity is that the passionate cry for help, deliverance, and even vengeance goes up to God. There it is purged and purified from all that is selfish and unworthy and made to contribute to the fulfilment of the age-long purpose.—G. W. THORN.

Never a sigh of passion or of pity,
Never a wail for weakness or for wrong,
Has not its archive in the angels' city,
Finds not its echo in the endless song.—MYERS.

The needs of the weakest saints on earth concern God more than the psalmody of the highest orders of the heavenly hosts.—R. H. CHARLES.

Lo, I who have wept
All day and night, beseech Thee by my tears,
And by that dread response of curse and groan,
Men alternate across these hemispheres,
Vouchsafe us such a half-hour's hush alone,
In compensation for our stormy years :
As heaven has passed from song, let earth from moan.
E. B. BROWNING.

This silence of half an hour is a mark of solemnity to procure attention, and to prepare the mind for great and signal events. Perhaps there is also an allusion to a ceremony among the Jews. As Philo informs us, the incense used to be offered before the morning, and after the evening sacrifice : and, while the sacrifices were made, 2 Chron. xxix. 25—28, the voices and instruments and trumpets sounded : while the priest went into the temple to burn incense, Luke i. 10, all were silent, and the people prayed without to themselves. Now this was the morning of the church, and therefore the silence precedes the trumpet.—T. NEWTON.

THE SEVEN TRUMPETS OF WARNING

THE FIRST FOUR TRUMPETS

And the seven angels which had the seven trumpets prepared themselves to sound. And the first sounded, and there followed hail and fire, mingled with blood, and they were cast upon the earth: and the third part of the earth was burnt up. . . . And the second angel sounded, and as it were a great mountain burning with fire was cast into the sea: and the third part of the sea became blood. . . . And the third angel sounded, and there fell from heaven a great star, burning as a torch, and it fell upon the third part of the rivers, and upon the fountains of the waters; and the name of the star is called Wormwood. . . . And the fourth angel sounded, and the third part of the sun was smitten, and the third part of the moon, and the third part of the stars.

Rev. VIII. 6–8, 10–12.

THE repetition of the vision of judgment in various forms is one of the recognised Hebrew methods of expressing their certainty. The same general calamities are indicated by diverse symbols.

F. W. Farrar.

The trumpets represent God's wrath and indignation against His enemies, and the execution of His retributive judgments.

Bp. Wordsworth.

i. *The Blight on Land*

The connection of fire with blood recalls the imagery of Joel ii. 30, which, as St. Peter (Acts ii. 16) declared, began to be fulfilled at the Day of Pentecost. The mention of "hail" connects this Trumpet with the plagues of Egypt; and suggests the deliverance of Israel from bondage, which symbolises the calling of the Church of Christ from the world. And thus the Trumpet-Visions open, somewhat after the manner of the Seal-

Visions, with the rise of Christianity and its progress amid trials and sufferings.—W. Lee.

We must not press the phrase "the third part" too closely: it is clearly designed to remind us that in wrath God remembers mercy, and that while He humbles all He does not utterly destroy.

W. Boyd Carpenter.

ii. *The Blight on Sea*

The sea is smitten; its inhabitants perish; commerce is interrupted. Nothing consequently can diminish the terrible effects of the preceding calamity.

F. Godet.

The extraordinary aspect of Thera (the modern Santorin), even when its volcanic fires were dormant, may well have furnished this image.—A. P. Stanley.

Even when the submarine volcano is quiescent the sea in the immediate vicinity of the cone is of a brilliant orange colour, from the action of oxide of iron.

J. Moffatt.

In the imagery of the mountain there may be a reminiscence of the difficult verses in Jer. li. 25, "I am against thee, O destroying mountain, saith the Lord, which destroyest all the earth."—C. A. Scott.

iii. *The Star called Wormwood*

The rivers and the fountains of water yielding an element absolutely essential to the existence of life become bitter and poisonous. The vehicle of this judgment is a great star falling from heaven, burning like a torch. In the Egyptian plague the waters are turned into blood, so that the Egyptians loathed to drink of them, and all the waters of Egypt were affected

by the plague ; here the waters are made bitter and poisonous like the waters of Marah.—A. DEANE.

It is hardly possible to read of this third plague, and not to think of the deadly effect of those strong spirituous drinks which are in fact water turned into poison. The very name *absinthe* is not unknown in their nomenclature : and there is no effect which could be so aptly described by the falling of fire into water, as this, which results in *ardent* spirit, in that which the simple islanders of the South Sea call *firewater*. That this plague may go on to destroy even this fearful proportion of the ungodly in the latter days is far from impossible, considering its prevalence even now in some parts of the civilised world.—H. ALFORD.

iv. *The Heavens darkened*

After the earth, the sea, and the fountains of water, the air takes its turn. It becomes dark, and the inhabitants of the earth are deprived of a part of the light of the sun and of the stars. There is nothing to indicate that these plagues are to be understood in an allegorical sense. They are the convulsions of Nature in process of dissolution.—F. GODET.

Darkening, smiting, or setting of the sun, moon, and stars, deepens the sense of desolation. As light is the symbol of joy and safety, so darkness carries the thought of misery and danger. Those who apply the vision to the downfall of the Roman Empire see in the figure the extinguishing of all its authority and power.

J. BORROWBY.

This darkness is spiritual blindness.—DIODATI.

What darkness is there in the Church when the knowledge of the Sun of Righteousness disappears.

QUESNEL.

THE FIFTH AND SIXTH TRUMPETS

v. *Demonic-Hordes*

And the fifth angel sounded, and I saw a star from heaven fallen unto the earth: and there was given to him the key of the pit of the abyss. And he opened the pit of the abyss; and there went up a smoke out of the pit, as the smoke of a great furnace; and the sun and the air were darkened by reason of the smoke of the pit. And out of the smoke came forth locusts upon the earth; and power was given unto them, as the scorpions of the earth have power. . . . And the sixth angel sounded, and I heard a voice . . . saying to the sixth angel, which had the trumpet, Loose the four angels which are bound at the great river Euphrates. And the four angels were loosed . . . that they should kill the third part of men. And the number of the armies of the horsemen was twice ten thousand times ten thousand.

Rev. IX. 1–3, 13–16.

FROM out of the bottomless pit, the dwelling-place of the devils (Luke viii. 31), issue a cloud of evil spirits, represented under the image of locusts, of brilliant and attractive colours, but armed with the sting of a scorpion, and who for five months (the time during which in the East the plague of locusts lasts—May to December) throw into a kind of delirium—not of joy, but of deep sadness—mankind crushed under the weight of its struggle against the Almighty. It is as if the inhabitants of the earth were subjected to *possession* on a great scale, after the likeness of the single instances of the kind which we find in the gospel history.—F. GODET.

These terrible beings were an ordered host under the direction of a king who was the angel of the abyss. He is called *Abaddon* in Hebrew, or *Apollyon* in Greek, both words meaning "Destroyer."

G. W. THORN.

The twenty-four angels, who are the Church, have crowns of gold. But these have crowns like gold, as pretending to false triumphs.—BEDE.

Scorpions were a natural symbol for vicious and dangerous opponents whose attacks were always painful and might be mortal.—J. MOFFATT.

vi. *Invading Armies*

The judgment itself consists in setting free four angels hitherto bound ; in giving scope, that is, to the operation of a particular agency thus far restrained by God's long-suffering toward *the world of the ungodly*. The angels are four in number, in allusion to the four corners of the earth, or the four winds, to express the world-wide character of the judgments foretold.

C. J. VAUGHAN.

Men in those days foresaw a " Yellow Peril " with no less anxiety than some do to-day. And more than once in the history of Europe this has been the form which God's judgment has taken, as when the Huns, the Tartars, and the Ottomans were successively let loose from their abodes in the East.—C. A. SCOTT.

The judgments of the trumpets are judgments on the world. The Church, it is true, may also suffer from them, but not in judgment. They may be part of her trial, as she mixes with the world during her earthly pilgrimage. Trial, however, is not judgment ; it is the discipline of a Father's hand.—W. MILLIGAN.

He hath sounded forth the trumpet that shall never
call retreat ;
He is sifting out the hearts of men before His judgment-
seat :
Be swift, my soul, to answer Him ! be jubilant, my feet !
Our God is marching on.—JULIA WARD HOWE.

THE WARNINGS UNHEEDED

The rest of mankind, which were not killed with these plagues, repented not of the works of their hands.

Rev. IX. 20.

NOTWITHSTANDING all these calamities—last appeals from the Divine holiness to the conscience of man—men do not come to themselves. They continue to live in their idolatrous and corrupt practices. The Apocalypse, in fact, does not recognise any conversion of the pagan world between the time of the primitive Church and the epoch of the Parousia. It sees the abominations of idolatry lasting on to the end.—F. GODET.

Oh how grievous is it to think of that degree of obstinacy and perverseness which so generally prevails in the world, and which renders men so incorrigible under the most painful chastisements. Send forth, O Lord, the gentle influences of the Spirit, and melt those hearts, which will not be broken by the weightiest strokes of Thy vengeance; and deliver us from the temper of those who are hardened by correction, and in the time of their misery and affliction increase and multiply their transgressions.—P. DODDRIDGE.

That man who puts out his own eyes is in darkness, not because the sun is darkened towards him, has less light for him, or has lost all inclination to enlighten him, but because he has put out that birth of light in himself which alone made him capable of seeing in the light of the sun. It is thus with fallen angels; they have extinguished in themselves that birth of light and love which was their only capacity for that happiness which infinitely and everywhere flows forth from God.

W. LAW.

INSPIRATION RENEWED

I took the little book out of the angel's hand, and ate it up; and it was in my mouth sweet as honey: and when I had eaten it, my belly was made bitter.

Rev. X. 10.

THE Evangelist's going for the book, and asking for the book, differs from Ezekiel, where it is more passively described; but here it indicates man's co-operation with God, his willingness to receive that which was bitter to the heart within. The introduction of "the little book" at this place is essential; inasmuch as the inspired writer proceeds at once, after partaking of the hidden knowledge, to recapitulate the Church's history, which he describes through the remainder of the Apocalypse; the varied aspects and forms which wickedness assumes, the manifold antagonistic shapes in which Christ and Antichrist will be seen in their followers. For St. John had gone over the development of the Church as yet mostly as it would be visible to the external eye, but the complicated inner nature of the kingdom he is now given to know—which to the Apostles was not at first revealed, of the Church visible and invisible carrying on their course together. . . . He is made partaker, as it were sacramentally (for eating has a sacramental allusion), of the mystery and power of this "little book."

I. WILLIAMS.

It becomes God's servants to digest in their own souls the messages they bring to others in His name, and to be suitably affected therewith themselves; also to deliver every message with which they are charged, whether pleasing or unpleasing to men.—M. HENRY.

By study and meditation he digested and settled it in his heart.—E. LEIGH.

REASSURANCE OF THE CHURCH'S SAFETY

And there was given me a reed like unto a rod: and one said, Rise, and measure the temple of God, and the altar, and them that worship therein. And the court which is without the temple leave without, and measure it not; for it hath been given unto the nations: and the holy city shall they tread under foot forty and two months.

Rev. XI. 1, 2.

TO measure the temple is to mark out its extent; to ascertain (if I might so express it) how much is temple, what are the dimensions, what the limits, of that which is really holy. Like the very different yet not wholly divergent vision of the sealing, it is the object of this passage to indicate the safety, because the indelible consecration, of God's true servants. The shrine is to be measured: the court is to be left out. There shall always be a true Church, a true spiritual Divine temple: but there shall be appended to it a larger space which must be described rather as an outer court of that temple, a community which partakes not in the true worship of devotion and self-dedication, and which, whatever its profession and whatever its name, is in reality a multitude without grace and without vitality.—C. J. VAUGHAN.

The measuring prefigures the preservation of all that was fundamental and essential in the ancient religion, notwithstanding the destruction of all that was external in respect to the temple, the city, and the ancient people of God.—M. STUART.

There will always be the real and the conventional—the true and the formal Christian. The purpose of the measurement is to preserve that which is true, the Church within the Church, and all that is necessary for worship.—W. BOYD CARPENTER.

THE SEVENTH TRUMPET

And the seventh angel sounded; and there followed great voices in heaven, and they said, The kingdom of the world is become the kingdom *of our Lord, and of his Christ: and he shall reign for ever and ever. . . . And there was opened the temple of God that is in heaven; and there was seen in his temple the ark of his covenant; and there followed lightnings, and voices, and thunders, and an earthquake, and great hail.*
Rev. XI. 15, 19.

THE series of visions are not continuous but resumptive: not indeed going over the same ground with one another, either of time or of occurrence, but each evolving something which was not in the former, and putting the course of God's Providence in a different light. The seals involve the trumpets, the trumpets the vials—but not in mere temporal succession: the involution and inclusion are far deeper: the world-wide vision of the seals containing the cry for vengeance, out of which is evolved the series of the trumpets: and this again containing the episodical visions of the little book and the witnesses, out of which are evolved the visions of ecclesiastical faithfulness and apostasy which follow. . . . The symbolism of the *opening* for the first time of the heavenly temple indicates of what nature the succeeding visions are to be: they will relate to God's covenant people and His dealings with them. The solemn salvos, so to speak, of the artillery of heaven conclude, as before, this series of visions.—H. ALFORD.

But where, we may be disposed to ask, is the "woe" in all this? We are led to expect that the seventh trumpet as a woe trumpet will bring in some period of pain and trouble, as the others have done; but all we hear is the chorus of glad voices uttering praise:

we see no token of woe. The answer is that we must not overlook all that this song of rejoicing implies. The chorus we hear is the thanksgiving to God that the hour has come for the overthrow of the kingdom of evil, the manifestation of the sons of God, and the acknowledgment throughout the world of the sovereignty of the Lord and of His Christ. The overthrow of that evil kingdom, which is now to take place, brings with it woe to those who have supported it. It is woe on all those who have misused God's gifts and those beautiful things which He gave us liberally to enjoy. It is woe on those who have defiled those bodies, which are the temples of the Holy Ghost, profaned the earth which is God's footstool, or darkened by their evil deeds the heaven, which is His throne.

W. Boyd Carpenter.

The advent of that morn divine,
When nations may as forests grow,
Wherein the oak hates not the pine,
Nor beeches wish the cedar woe,
But all, in their unlikeness, blend
Confederate to one golden end.

William Watson.

It often falls, in course of common life,
That right long time is overborne of wrong,
Through avarice, or powre, guile, or strife,
That weakens her, and makes her party strong ;
But Justice, though her doome she doe prolong,
Yet at the last she will her owne cause right.

Spenser.

St. John is in rapture at the revelation, and, as it were, hurried away to a view of the happy period, without considering the steps preceding and conducting to it.—T. Newton.

THE CHURCH AND HER FOES

THE TWO PROTAGONISTS

And the dragon stood before the woman which was about to be delivered, that when she was delivered, he might devour her child. And she was delivered of a son, a man child, who is to rule all the nations with a rod of iron: and her child was caught up unto God, and unto his throne. And the woman fled into the wilderness, where she hath a place prepared of God.

Rev. XII. 4–6.

THE woman clothed with the sun, and having on her head a crown of twelve stars, is the Church of God. The *dragon* represents in this Book of Revelation the title of that *prince of this world* whose deep and bitter hostility to God and his Christ prompts all the efforts and frames all the machinations by which the world seeks to undermine the influence of the Saviour and of His people. The dragon is henceforth another name for the devil or Satan.—C. J. VAUGHAN.

So wonderfully are the type and antitype interwoven together, that even those who consider the man-child to represent our Lord Himself and His Incarnation, yet consider the Woman clothed with the sun to be the Church, as does St. Gregory.—I. WILLIAMS.

The Dragon being the devil, the symbolic features must be interpreted of the assuming by him of some of those details in the form of the beast in ch. xiii. 1 ff., to whom afterwards he gives his power and his throne: in other words, that he lays wait for the woman's offspring in the form of that anti-Christian power which is afterwards represented by the beast. At the same time the seven "crowned heads" may possess an appropriateness of their own. They may represent, as he is the Prince of this world, universality of earthly dominion.—H. ALFORD.

THE CHURCH DELIVERED

There were given to the woman the two wings of the great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness unto her place, where she is nourished for a time, and times, and half a time, from the face of the serpent.

Rev. XII. 14.

THE finest epic of the world might have for its motto: "The earth helped the woman." Creation is ultimately a witness for righteousness and truth. It is not one nation, one age, which is represented here; it is an eternal law.

W. BOYD CARPENTER.

The afflictions that the Church in the wilderness has met with, these cups of gold, are of more worth than are all the treasures of Egypt; they are needful and profitable, and praiseworthy also, and tend to the augmenting of our glory when the next world shall come. They are also a means by which men are proved to be sound, honest, faithful, and true lovers of God; to be those whose graces are not counterfeit, feigned, or unsound, but true and such as will be found to praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ; and have been the cause that the men of our Church in the wilderness have gloried in tribulation, taking pleasure in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions and distresses, for Christ's sake.—BUNYAN.

The design was, it would seem, to prepare a Christly past, to show whole ages of faith populated with men who were able, coming after their Master and bearing His cross, to suffer with Him and add their human testimony to His. And so it has been ordered that the Church of God shall know itself to be the child of suffering patience. The passive virtues of the Christian life are not sterile but eminently fruitful.—H. BUSHNELL.

SATAN'S ALLIES

i. *The Roman State*

And I saw a beast coming up out of the sea, having ten horns and seven heads, and on his horns ten diadems, and upon his heads names of blasphemy.
Rev. XIII. 1.

THE beast here symbolises the Pagan Roman Empire.
M. STUART.

The Empire is stamped as a weird and wild messiah of the devil on earth.
J. MOFFATT.

Although it be a matter of more diligent inquiry what that Beast may be, yet it is not unsuitable to right faith to understand thereby the city of the wicked, and the infidel people as opposed to the faithful and the city of God. . . . It was Nero Cæsar who was the first to reach the summit, and, as it were, the citadel of this vice (" drinking the blood of the martyrs ") ; for so great was his licentiousness that one would have thought there was nothing manly to be dreaded in him : and such his cruelty, that, had not the contrary been known, no one would have thought there was anything effeminate in his character.—AUGUSTINE.

The name or names of blasphemy are the Divine titles given to the kings, " Lord of the whole earth," and the like : in the Roman form, " Deus " or " Divus."—H. ALFORD.

" Who is like unto God ? " is the legend of the saints : the opposing cry is, " Who is like unto the beast ? " Can you not hear the words coming across the centuries from the lips of two Roman youths talking with each other, as they lounge together in the Forum ?—F. D. MAURICE.

Diadems for dignity, horns for power, and heads for subtilty.—E. LEIGH.

SATAN'S ALLIES—*continued*

ii. *The Imperial Priesthood*

And I saw another beast coming up out of the earth; and he had two horns like unto a lamb, and he spake as a dragon. And he exerciseth all the authority of the first beast in his sight. And he maketh the earth and them that dwell therein to worship the first beast, whose death-stroke was healed. And he doeth great signs, that he should even make fire to come down out of heaven upon the earth in the sight of men.

Rev. XIII. 11–13.

THE Seer now describes facts which history substantiates to us in their literal fulfilment. The image of the Cæsar was everywhere that which men were made to worship: it was before this that the Christian martyrs were brought to the test, and put to death if they refused the act of adoration. The words of Pliny's letter to Trajan are express on the point: "As for those who said they neither were nor ever had been Christians, I thought it right to let them go, since they recited a prayer to the gods at my dictation, made supplication with incense and wine to your statue, which I had ordered to be brought into court for the purpose together with the images of the gods, and, moreover, cursed Christ, not one of which things (so it is said) those who are really Christians can be made to do." So we may fairly assume that the image of the beast for the time being would be the image of the reigning emperor. It is not so easy to assign a meaning to the giving life and speech to the image of the beast. The allusion probably is to some great wonders permitted to the Pagan priests to try the faith of God's people.

H. ALFORD.

The object of every false religion, or corruption of

the faith, is to reconcile men to the world, or worship of the beast; ministering to pride of intellect, or sensuality, or self-righteousness; heresy and superstition, by lowering the object of worship; hypocrisy, by darkening it; all such manifold spiritual deceits bring men to substitute something else for Christ, and that is the worship of the ten-horned beast.

I. WILLIAMS.

All who use their knowledge, their culture, their wisdom, to teach men that there is nothing worthy of worship save what they can see, and touch, and taste, are acting the part of the second wild beast; and be they apostles of science, or apostles of culture, or apostles of logical immorality, or apostles of what is called materialism, if their teaching leads men to limit their worship to the visible and the tangible, they are making men worship the beast, who is the adversary of the servants of the Lamb.—W. BOYD CARPENTER.

The Christian Priesthood may be a stumbling-block and a most perilous snare. The Hebrew Priesthood utterly undid the Jews; a Priesthood full of human respects, of fleshly wisdom, and the friendship of the world. In like manner, the Christian Priesthood, not apostate or openly unbelieving, but through the aboundings of iniquity, will be aiding the persecutor, when the witnesses shall be as Elias was, but one among many. Throughout the world darkening the truth through lukewarmness, and by subtle persuasion leading men to some secret adoration or subjection to the first beast whom they ought openly to resist: coming with the two lamb-like horns, or the arms and the force of spiritual power; and the tongue of deceitful persuasion and excommunicating or publicly marking with apostasy the faithful few.—LACUNZA.

FORESHADOWINGS OF THE CRISIS

THE LAMB ON MOUNT ZION

And I saw, and behold, the Lamb standing on the mount Zion, and with him a hundred and forty and four thousand, having his name, and the name of his Father, written on their foreheads. And I heard a voice from heaven, as the voice of many waters; and as the voice of a great thunder: . . . and they sing as it were a new song before the throne . . .

Rev. XIV. 1-3.

THE combination of *three* such powerful enemies against Christianity—the *Dragon*, Satan; the *First Beast*, Pagan Rome; the *Second*, the Pagan Priesthood—was in itself of fearful import. To animate the courage, however, of this noble little band of Christians, the writer arrests the progress of action in the great drama, in order to hold out the *symbols of ultimate and certain victory*: Symbol *First* is of the Lamb (Christ) on the *earthly* Zion, surrounded by His sealed ones—not *forces* to be employed against enemies, but *trophies* of victory already achieved.—M. STUART.

By Mount Zion is meant no other than the Church, which, in order to overcome the grievances of its afflictions, is exalted by the sublime delight of contemplation, and celebrates at once, by praise and by imitation, the conflicts of her King. For this is in truth to sing unto the Lamb who stands.—BEDE.

Heaven is revealed to earth as the home-land of music; of music thus remote from what is gross and carnal; exhibiting likewise an incalculable range of variety, which rebukes and silences perverse suggestions of monotonous tedium in the final beatitude.

C. ROSSETTI.

The song has regard to matters of trial and triumph, of deep joy and heavenly purity of heart, which none other among men but these pure and holy ones are capable of apprehending. The sweetest and most skilful harmonies convey no pleasure to, nor are they appreciated by, an uneducated ear: whereas the experienced musician finds in every chord the most exquisite enjoyment. The unskilled ear, even though naturally distinctive of musical sounds, could not learn or reproduce them: but both these can be done by those who have ears to hear them. Even so this heavenly song speaks only to the virgin heart, and can be learnt only by those who accompany the Lamb whithersoever He goeth.—H. ALFORD.

The thunder-voice is heard by the ear, but in the song there is mystery; as speaking of that peace which passeth understanding; known of those who are taught by the Spirit, who have the seal of adoption, the "redeemed from the earth."—I. WILLIAMS.

The character of the redeemed is here set before us under the four heads of purity, of obedience, of unworldliness, of truthfulness; and their heavenly state, as one of safety, of rest, of happiness, of converse and communion with Christ.—C. J. VAUGHAN.

The voice of the Lord is compared to many waters for its irresistible force and its mysterious appeal, making men wonder; to thunder for its terror and power in shaking all things; to the gentle sound of harps for the peace and joy it works in the conscience.

E. LEIGH.

The sound from heaven is of the united voices of an immense multitude chanting the praises of God, and is compared to the music of waves, and the roll of thunder.—J. MEDE.

ANGELIC VOICES

And I saw another angel flying in mid heaven, having an eternal gospel to proclaim. *Rev. XIV.* 6.

TO support the faith of the elect, we have in rapid and glorious succession, the Church invisible; and then the everlasting Gospel, in winged flight heralding the end. It is the *everlasting Gospel* in brief simplicity, in distinction from these temporary troubles.—I. WILLIAMS.

The second angel follows on the first: the doom of the world-city, the metropolis of the Empire of the world-power, follows the proclamation of the Gospel. The principles of Christ's Gospel must undermine the world-power; the fall of some Babylon principle has almost always succeeded the age of spiritual revival. Pagan Rome goes down before the Gospel. Civil freedom follows the wake of religious freedom, for Babylon belongs not to one age. Pagan Rome was Babylon to St. John; papal Rome was often Babylon to a later age. Dante, Savonarola, Tauler, Luther, felt her to be so in the days when their eyes were enlightened; but Babylon was not on the Euphrates alone: she has reared palaces on the Seine, and on the Thames, Tiber, and on the Bosphorus. She may yet erect her power in more imposing form; but faith in the Gospel, which is the power of God, will cast her down along with everything that exalts itself against the knowledge of God.—W. BOYD CARPENTER.

The eternal gospel because it proceeded from the eternal counsel of God; it contained the words of eternal life; and it remaineth for all eternity.—J. MEDE.

The symbols are, heaven and an angel, bearing a precious treasure, "flying in the midst of heaven,"

and crying with a "loud voice." Heaven is often, throughout the Scripture, used literally to indicate the place of glory, the beatific vision, the mansion of the blessed. In the passage before us it is a symbol, and means the Church under the New Testament dispensation. The "midst of heaven," then, is the midst of the Christian Churches. Angel is an official term; it is frequently applied to those spiritual and celestial beings who are sent forth to minister to the heirs of salvation; but the word expresses not so much the nature as the character and duty of those who are employed as messengers. It is here a symbol, and represents the ministers of the Gospel, the messengers of the Lord to His people; and means not one particular minister, but a Gospel ministry in the aggregate. Of this a satisfactory explanation occurs in the second and third chapters of the book, where the symbol always refers to the ministry of the Churches. Flying is the figure of speed. A continued flying indicates an uninterrupted and unceasing progress. The loud voice expresses earnestness, zeal, and authority. From the symbolical terms, we then collect, that John foresaw a period when a zealous ministry would arise in the midst of the churches, with a new and extraordinary spirit; a ministry singular in its views and exertions, and remarkable for its plans and success; a ministry which would arrest the public attention, and be a prelude to momentous changes in the Church and in the world. Such explanation removes every doubt respecting the meaning of these symbols. The angel has the everlasting Gospel to preach; this is his treasure. He calls to the practice of the essential duties of true religion, and announces the hour of God's judgment.

J. H. Livingston.

THE BEATITUDE OF THE MARTYRS

And I heard a voice from heaven saying, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; for their works follow with them.

Rev. XIV. 13.

ONLY "they who die in the Lord" are here accounted blessed; it cannot possibly be gain to die till Christ has first been made the life of the soul. Where this becomes our matchless privilege, in the way of faith and penitence, we may expect a state of bliss, not merely after centuries have rolled over our dust, but even from the moment of our departure from this life. "Henceforth," said the Spirit, "the dead in Christ are blessed." And in this rest "their works do follow them," that is to say, from every seed of faith and love, strewed here below with unwearied hands, the harvest is to be expected there. Mark well, it states not that their works precede them, in any wise to open for them heaven's portals; but that their works do follow them, where hidden good comes forth at once to view.

VAN OOSTERZEE.

Who dare build temples, without tombs in sight?
Or live, without some dead man's benison?
Or seek truth, hope for good, and strive for right,
If, looking up, he saw not in the sun
Some angel of the martyrs all day long
Standing and waiting?—E. B. BROWNING.

Sleep after toil, port after stormy seas,
Death after life doth greatly please.

SPENSER.

Here two particulars are given as reasons and grounds why they that die in the Lord are declared to be in so blessed a condition : for good men, when they are departed this life, " rest from their labours," are free from all the labours and pains with which they were exercised in this world ; and also they reap the comfort and reward of all the good which they have done in this world, " their works do follow them," or go along with them, to receive the reward which God hath promised to His obedient servants.

ABP. TILLOTSON.

Not one act honestly done for Christ—done in humility, done in sincerity, done in earnestness, done in unselfishness—shall fail or be forgotten when the joyful summons shall be heard at evening, " Call the labourers and give them their hire." It is not for man to anticipate the reward of his deeds on earth : he knows that the very best of them needs itself to be forgiven, needs to be washed in tears of repentance and sanctified through a more availing blood. This is well. Nevertheless the word of God standeth sure. " They shall rest from their labours ; and their works follow with them."—C. J. VAUGHAN.

Beza renders the text, " Who die for the Lord," or " for His sake " ; they die in the Lord which either suffer death for Christ, or end their life in firm faith in Him, that suffer martyrdom, or die anyway in the state of grace. " Their works " are their eternal rewards, and that in four things : (1) In the consummation of grace ; (2) In perfect communion with Christ ; (3) In perfect enjoyment of God ; (4) In the glorious employment that the soul shall have in heaven.—E. LEIGH.

They who are the keepers of the *faith* of *Jesus*, that is, the faith taught by Jesus.—BP. WORDSWORTH.

THE HARVEST AND THE VINTAGE

And I saw, and behold, a white cloud; and on the cloud I saw *one sitting like unto a son of man, having on his head a golden crown, and in his hand a sharp sickle.*
Rev. XIV. 14.

TO what does this harvest refer? Is it the ingathering of the wicked, or of the saints, or of both together? Each of these has its examples in Scripture symbolism. There are circumstances in the context which tell both ways. The parallelism with the vintage which follows seems to favour a harvest of the wicked: but then on the other hand, if so, what is the distinction between the two ingatherings? And why do we read of the casting into the winepress of God's wrath in the second case, and of no corresponding feature in the other? Beside, the two gatherings seem quite distinct. The former is over before the other begins. On the whole then, though I would not pronounce decidedly, I must incline to think that the harvest is the ingathering of the saints, God's harvest, reaped from the earth: described here thus generally, before the vintage of wrath which follows. And thus we have at least these two visions in harmony with the character of this section, which contains the mingled agency and fortunes of the Church and of its enemies; thus this harvest answers to the great preaching of the everlasting Gospel, while the following vintage fulfils the denunciations of wrath on those who worship the image or receive the mark of the beast.—H. ALFORD.

Because the power of the heavenly judgment cannot be in any way avoided (for we are in truth within it, however we may endeavour to escape), the judge is rightly said to hold a sickle.—GREGORY.

The sickle shows that the harvest has come. But what harvest is this? It is the gathering of the good seed, the full corn in the ear, unto the celestial garner (Mark iv. 26–29). The angel who announces that the harvest is ready comes forth from the Temple, the inner shrine, the holy place which was measured off in the sanctuary of the faithful (xi. 1); whereas the angel who calls for the vintage comes forth from the altar (verse 18).

There must be some difference between the vintage and the harvest. There is an autumn gladness about the harvest; there are tokens of judgment in the vintage. It is not the sharp sickle alone which is required: the winepress, the winepress of God's wrath, is called into use. An angel from the Temple calls to the Son of Man to reap the harvest; an angel from the altar calls to an angel from the Temple to gather in the vintage. The vintage symbolises a harvest of judgment: do not the words respecting Babylon (verse 8) come to the mind and confirm this? The angel rises from the altar, beneath which the murdered saints have cried, "How long?" and proclaims, "The vintage, the hour of vengeance has come!" And it is not without significance that the angel to whom this cry is addressed comes forth out of the Temple, the safe sanctuary of God's faithful ones, as one who has witnessed their secret sorrows and their sufferings, and is fitted "to recompense tribulation to the troubles of Israel" (2 Thess. i. 6). The two scenes—one in Chapter VI, 9, 10 (the souls crying beneath the altar), the other in Chapter VIII, 5 (the angel mingling incense with the prayers of the saints)—must be remembered. The angel who had charge of the altar fire, and flung the ashes betokening judgments towards the earth, calls

with a loud cry, " Gather the bunches of the vine of the earth, because her grapes are ripe." The vine (i.e. the vintage of the vine), when gathered, is cast into " the winepress of the wrath of God, the great (winepress). And the winepress was trodden without the city, and there came forth blood out of the winepress as far as the bridles of the horses, from a thousand six hundred furlongs." The outflow of the blood of the grapes pressed reached over a distance of sixteen hundred stadii. The treading of the winepress was a figure representing vengeance ; the red juice of the grape strongly suggested the shedding of blood (cp. Isa. lxiii. 2–4). The winepresses stood usually outside the city : it is so represented here, not without an allusion to those who fall under the weight of this judgment because they have refused the defence of the true city and sanctuary (cp. verse 1 and Ps. cxxxii. 17, 18). The distance (sixteen hundred stadii), i.e. four multiplied into itself and then multiplied by a hundred, is symbolical (such seems the most probable meaning) of a judgment complete and full, and reaching to all corners of the earth—" the whole world, of which Satan is called the prince, is judged and condemned, and punished." In the vintage and harvest is a piercing discrimination between the faithful fruit-bearing children of the King and the cowardly or selfish, whose hearts are for self and not for Christ, but who yield themselves servants to sin.—W. Boyd Carpenter.

The desire of seeing the reign of God and the end of sin causes the saints to pray for the end of the world. From the altar of the cross proceeds the judgment of the reprobate, as from thence likewise proceeds the salvation of the elect.—Quesnel.

THE SEVEN VIALS OF WRATH

THE PRELUDE-SONG

And they sing the song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb.
Rev. XV. 3.

THE *song of Moses* is the lyrical celebration of the typical redemption by Moses; the *song of the Lamb* the celebration of the real redemption by the Lamb; and the *two songs in their unity* as one song are the lyrical celebration of the Old and New Testament revelation faith, in view of the whole redemption which began with Moses, was decided with Christ, and is now thoroughly consummated through the fiery judgments of God. Not two songs, therefore, sung respectively by Old and New Testament believers; not the song of Moses applied to Christ and the things of Christ; not a song composed at once by Moses and by the Lamb; but the whole redemption as mediated by Moses and Christ, with a distinct reference to the song of Moses and the passage through the Red Sea, as a type of the passage through those rivers of fire by which the faithful of the last time shall be separated from the sinners of that time.—LANGE.

The life of the redeemed is here represented as a "Service of Song." Music is frequently the only language that can give expression to our highest thoughts and deepest feelings. Life as it approaches perfection becomes melodious. There is no music like the music of triumph and no songs like those which celebrate deliverance. It is a mistake to suppose that struggle and sorrow silence the voice of song. The burden of this sacred song is of Moses, the much-tried servant of God, and of the Lamb, the eternal symbol of sacrificial suffering. The thing that weighs most heavily upon thee thou shalt some day set to music.—J. THEW.

THE FIRST FOUR VIALS

And I heard a great voice out of the temple, saying to the seven angels, Go ye, and pour out the seven bowls of the wrath of God into the earth. And the first went, and poured out his bowl into the earth; and it became a noisome and grievous sore upon the men which had the mark of the beast, and which worshipped his image. And the second poured out his bowl into the sea; and it became blood as of a dead man; . . . And the third poured out his bowl into the rivers and the fountains of the waters; and it became blood. . . . And the fourth poured out his bowl upon the sun; and it was given unto it to scorch men with fire.

Rev. XVI. 1–3, 4, 8.

THE plagues which follow on the pouring of the bowls are to be understood neither as a repetition of those following on the trumpets, nor as a wholly independent series of judgments. They represent the woes and judgments which immediately precede the coming of Christ, in their horror and certainty, in the universality with which they affect all forms of life, and in their special application to the forms of iniquity and blasphemy which have been exposed to view.—C. A. Scott.

The pouring out of the seven vials represents the extremest punishments of God, upon the throne and empire of the beast. . . . It is the history of the plagues of Egypt over again. A noisome sore consumes the flesh of the subjects of the beast (first vial). The waters of the sea are corrupted, and all the inhabitants of the ocean perish (second vial: an aggravation of the second trumpet). A similar judgment smites the rivers and fountains of waters (third vial: compare the third trumpet). A burning sun scorches the inhabitants of the earth (fourth vial). These four vials constitute a first series

of plagues, after which the author remarks that men only blasphemed with so much the greater audacity the name of the God who had sent these plagues upon them.—F. GODET.

While in the first four vials the main features of the first four trumpets are reproduced, there is one notable distinction in the case of the *fourth*. While by the plague of the fourth trumpet, the sun, moon, and stars are partially darkened, by that of the fourth vial the power of the sun is *increased*, and the darkening of the Kingdom of the beast is reserved for the *fifth*. On the whole the series of vials seems to bear a less general character than the other two. It takes up a particular point in the prophecy, and deals with symbols and persons previously described.—H. ALFORD.

The breadth of the vials at the upper part contributes to the vastness of the sudden outpouring. The trumpets have shaken the kingdom of the world in a long circuit; the vials with swift and sharp violence break to pieces the beast who had clothed himself with the kingdom of the world, and his followers and resources. The style expresses a very quick outpouring of the vials, of which quickness this also is a proof, the vials have no period of time expressed.—BENGEL.

The scourgings of God discover the heart; out of a perverse heart they bring forth blasphemies, out of a penitent heart they bring praise.—QUESNEL.

Whether intense heat of the sun be literally meant, uncommon sultry seasons, scorching and withering the fruits of the earth, and producing pestilential disorders; or, figuratively, a most tyrannical and exhorbitant exercise of arbitrary power, by those who may be represented as " the sun " in the firmament of the beast, time must discover.—T. NEWTON.

THE LAST THREE VIALS

And the fifth poured out his bowl upon the throne of the beast; and his kingdom was darkened. . . . And the sixth poured out his bowl upon the great river, the river *Euphrates; and the water thereof was dried up, that the way might be made ready for the kings that* come *from the sunrising. . . . And the seventh poured out his bowl upon the air; and there came forth a great voice out of the temple, from the throne, saying, It is done.*

Rev. XVI. 10, 12, 17.

WHAT the throne, or seat, of the beast signifies may thus be gathered; the beast signifies idol-worship; and as the throne of that may signify the place where it resides, so it may signify also that which sustains and supports it. This was the power of the Roman Empire, the strength and dignity thereof to which so great a part of the world was subjected, and which it made use of to maintain the idol-worship against Christianity. And so the *throne of the beast* is expounded in the next words by *the kingdom*, or *empire* of Rome. Now that which is here said to befall the empire by the pouring out of the fifth vial is that it was *darkened*, that is, lost much of its splendour which before it enjoyed, which belongs clearly to the incursions of the barbarians, about these times which are here described, as everywhere appears in history.—H. HAMMOND.

The final catastrophe of human society now takes shape in a pair of colossal disasters. The great city which is the centre of power and of civilisation, the throne of the Beast, and the home of his worship, must suffer a dramatic fall. The armies which are assembled at the summons of the sixth vial have to sack the city of Rome before they march to the final conflict at

Armageddon. These armies of unrepentant heathendom assembled to challenge the powers of heaven must be annihilated. Then, and not till then, can the Kingdom of God be established on earth.

M. G. GLAZEBROOK.

By the drying up of the Euphrates, the way is made open for " the kings that come from the sunrising." These kings, in all probability, stand for those Parthian rulers in alliance with whom Nero was to return from the East to destroy Rome, and challenge the forces of God to a final conflict.—C. A. SCOTT.

The air is the laboratory of thunder, lightning, hail. We also learn from Eph. ii. 2, that " the air " is the region of the power of evil. The seventh vial accordingly is poured out upon the throne of the Dragon (Satan), as the fifth had been poured out upon the throne of the beast. The devil is cast into the lake of fire *after* the beast and the " false prophet."—W. LEE.

The world-power would have us worship the things seen. It sends forth the spirit of earthliness, the spirit which works in the voluptuary, the ambitious, the avaricious, the spirit which makes earthly things its end. The world-culture sends forth its spirit of intellectualism, which denies the spiritual nature of man, and substitutes taste and culture for spirituality. The dragon sends forth the spirit of egotism, of proud, self-sufficient independence, which culminates in utter hatred of the Creator. The three spirits combined make up that wisdom, which St. James described as earthly, sensual (unspiritual), devilish. We may compare the three foes in the " red Cross Knight " : Sansloy (without law), Sansfoy (without faith), and Sansjoy (without joy) in Spenser's *Faërie Queene*.

W. BOYD CARPENTER.

THE DOOM OF IMPERIAL ROME

THE CITY OF BLOOD

And I saw the woman drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus. And when I saw her, I wondered with a great wonder.

Rev. XVII. 6.

THROUGHOUT the extent of Bible history from Genesis to Revelation, one city remains, which in fact and symbol is execrated as the enemy of God and the stronghold of evil. In Genesis we are called to see its foundation, as the first city that wandering men established and the quick ruin which fell upon its impious builders. By the prophets we hear it cursed as the oppressor of God's people, the temptress of nations, full of cruelty and wantonness. And in the Book of Revelation its character and curse are transferred to Rome, and New Babylon stands over against New Jerusalem. Babylon is the Atheist of the Old Testament, as she is the Antichrist of the New. Her haughtiness and secure pride are the fruit of an atheistic self-sufficiency.

G. A. SMITH.

Rome is the city where all kinds of enormity and filthy shame meet together and become fashionable. . . . A vast multitude were convicted, not so much of arson, as of hatred of the human race. And they were not only put to death, but put to death with insult, in that they were either dressed up in skins of beasts to perish by the worrying of dogs, or else put on crosses to be set on fire, and, when the daylight failed, to be burnt as torches by night.—TACITUS.

Your avarice afflicts the world,
Trampling the good and lifting the depraved.

DANTE.

"BABYLON IS FALLEN!"

And he cried with a mighty voice, saying, Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great.
Rev. XVIII. 2.

TO the conscience of Christ's Seer, Babylon, though dead and deserted in the East, came to life again in the West. To the city of Rome in his day John transferred, word by word, the phrases of Isaiah and Jeremiah. Rome was Babylon so far as Rome was filled with cruelty, with arrogance, with trust in riches, with credulity in divination, with that waste of mental and moral power which Juvenal exposed in her. But we are not to leave the matter even here; we are to use that freedom with John which John uses with the prophets. . . . Some honest people continue to confine the references in the Book of Revelation to the City and Church of Rome. It is quite true that many features of his Babylon may be traced upon the successor of the Roman Empire, the Roman Church. But what is that to us with incarnations of the Babylonian spirit so much nearer ourselves for infection and for danger than the Church of Rome can ever be?

G. A. SMITH.

Judgment fell; and to its severity the city itself bears an infallible testimony. So early as the beginning of the fifteenth century this was the language of a reflecting observer: "The hill of the Capitol, on which we sit, was formerly the head of the Roman Empire, the citadel of the earth, the terror of kings; illustrated by the footsteps of so many triumphs, enriched with the spoils and tributes of so many nations. This spectacle of the world, how is it fallen! how changed! how defaced! the path of victory is obliterated by vines, and the benches of the senators are concealed by a

dunghill. Cast your eyes on the Palatine hill, and seek among the shapeless and enormous fragments the marble theatre, the obelisks, the colossal statues, the porticoes of Nero's palace: survey the other hills of the city, the vacant space is interrupted only by ruins and gardens. The forum of the Roman people, where they assembled to enact their laws and elect their magistrates, is now enclosed for the cultivation of pot-herbs, or thrown open for the reception of swine and buffaloes. The public and private edifices, that were founded for eternity, lie prostrate, naked, and broken, like the limbs of a mighty giant; and the ruin is the more visible, from the stupendous relics that have survived the injuries of time and fortune" (Gibbon, ch. 71).

C. J. VAUGHAN.

The Goth, the Christian, Time, War, Flood, and Fire,
Have dealt upon the seven-hill'd city's pride;
She saw her glories star by star expire,
And up the steep barbarian monarchs ride.—BYRON.

For she has fallen
On whose black front was written Mystery;
She that reeled heavily, whose wine was blood;
She that worked whoredom with the Daemon Power,
And from the dark embrace all evil things
Brought forth and nurtured: mitred atheism! . . .

COLERIDGE.

The cause of her fall is here assigned. She who, as a church of Christ, should have been the teacher and preserver of pure religion and morality, had become the seducer and corrupter of the nations and their kings, and had set the example of that insolent luxury, disposing them to irreligion, which it was her duty to oppose.—DEAN WOODHOUSE.

"COME FORTH, MY PEOPLE!"

And I heard another voice from heaven, saying, Come forth, my people, out of her, that ye have no fellowship with her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues.
Rev. XVIII. 4.

IF you were to ask me what is the apostasy of these last times, or whence is all the degeneracy of the present Christian Church, I should place it all in a worldly spirit. If here you see open wickedness, there only forms of godliness; if here superficial holiness, political piety, crafty prudence, there haughty sanctity, partial zeal, envious orthodoxy; if almost everywhere you see blindness and hardness of heart, and the Church trading with the Gospel; all these are only so many forms and proper fruits of the worldly spirit. This is the great net with which the devil becomes a fisher of men; and be assured of this, that every son of man is in this net, till through and by the Spirit of Christ he breaks out of it.—W. LAW.

What shall we say, but that we must flee from the midst of Babylon? Which prophetical precept is spiritually understood that we flee from the city of this world, which, indeed, is the society of evil angels and evil men; that by the steps of faith, which worketh by love, we flee by advancing onward unto the living God.—AUGUSTINE.

The inference has been justly made that there shall be, even to the last, saints of God in the midst of Rome. The danger was twofold: (1) lest by over-persuasion or guilty conformity they should become accomplices in her crimes; (2) lest they should share in her punishment.—H. ALFORD.

THE DIRGE OF DESOLATION

Woe, woe, the great city, she that was arrayed in fine linen and purple and scarlet, and decked with gold and precious stone and pearl! for in one hour so great riches is made desolate.

Rev. XVIII. 16.

IT has been said that the general description here does not suit Rome, as Rome never was and never could be a commercial centre; but the picture is designed to show the corrupt luxury and voluptuousness of society in great Babylon, not necessarily the accumulated merchandise of a great commercial city. The various wares are "for her use and consumption," not for her to sell. All the avenues from every distant spot of the earth found their focus in Rome; her existence, her political supremacy, and her luxuriousness of living, created and sustained all the commercial activity here described; with her fall, the hope of their gains passed from her merchants.—W. BOYD CARPENTER.

It must be observed that all these things which are so minutely particularised, as expressive of the meshes of that net by which men's souls are taken, have also their place in the new Jerusalem, where every jewel is specified by name, and the gold of its streets, and the fine linen, and the incense, and the wine, and the oil, its white horses also. In both alike must they stand for spiritual merchandise of good and evil, the false riches and the true.—I. WILLIAMS.

Men are we, and must grieve when even the shade
Of that which once was great is passed away.

W. WORDSWORTH.

In a moment see how soon this mightiness meets misery.—SHAKESPEARE.

THE TRIUMPH-SONG IN HEAVEN

And the four and twenty elders and the four living creatures fell down and worshipped God that sitteth on the throne, saying, Amen; Hallelujah. And a voice came forth from the throne, saying, Give praise to our God, all ye his servants, ye that fear him, the small and the great.

Rev. XIX. 4, 5.

THE phrase "Hallelujah," like the "Amen" and the "Hosanna" of the Psalms, has become current in our language; it is found in the Psalter for the first time in the *last* words of Ps. civ. 35, where R. Kimchi notes that in the Psalms and elsewhere Hallelujah chiefly appears where mention is made of the punishment of the ungodly. Thus it is used here also. The Jewish "*Te Deum*," as it is called, consisting of Ps. civ.–cix., chiefly sung at the Feasts of the Passover and of Tabernacles, derived its title of "The Great Hallel" from the frequent use in those Psalms of the phrase Hallelujah. Here, then, we have the great Hallelujah of the Apocalypse; and the Christian "*Te Deum*" has thus its counterpart in heaven.

W. LEE.

Heaven is made up of Amen and Allelujah, that is, it is all Truth and Praise.—AUGUSTINE.

This for comfort thou must know,
Times that are ill won't still be so.
Cloud will not ever powre down raine;
A sullen day will cleeve againe.
First peals of Thunder we must heare,
Then lutes and harpes shall stroke the eare.

HERRICK.

It is remarkable how in Scripture joy and thanksgiving are connected with the judgment.—I. WILLIAMS.

The saints who were bidden in the last chapter to rejoice are now heard raising their songs as in one great voice of praise. The song is as follows :

Alleluia !
The salvation, and the glory, and the power
Are our God's,
Because true and righteous are His judgments,
Because He judged the great harlot, who corrupted the earth in her fornication,
And avenged the blood of His servants out of her hand.
Alleluia !

This last " Alleluia " clearly belongs to the song or chorus. It is separated from the body of it by the descriptive words (verse 3). The Evangelist, as he writes, seems to hear once more the strains of the anthem : he writes down the words, and, as the final " Alleluia " bursts forth after a musical pause, he writes, " once more they have said Alleluia." The word Alleluia occurs in this passage no less than four times (verses 1, 3, 4, 6) : it is nowhere else used in the New Testament ; but it is familiar to us in the Psalms, as fifteen of them begin or end with " Praise ye the Lord," or " Hallelujah " ; and the genius of Handel has enshrined the word in imperishable music. The song here does not begin with ascribing " salvation, etc.," to God, as the English version suggests : it rather affirms the fact : the salvation, etc., is God's. It is the echo of the ancient utterance—" Salvation belongeth unto God." It is the triumphant affirmation of the truth by which the Church and children of God had sustained their struggling petitions, as they closed the prayer which Christ Himself had taught them, saying, when too often it seemed to be otherwise, " Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory." So here they give a threefold praise : the salvation, and the

glory, and the power are all God's. The manifestation of His power is in the deliverance of His children from the evil, from the great harlot, and in the avenging the blood of His servants out of her hand, " forcing, as it were, out of her hand the price of their blood."

The twenty-four elders, the representatives of the Church, and the four living beings, the representatives of nature, fell down and worshipped God who sitteth (not " sat," as in the English version) on the throne. These, too, join in the chorus of praise.

From the direction of the throne there came a voice bidding all God's servants rejoice. We are not told whose voice it is. Some have assumed that it is Christ's : it is better to leave it indefinite. In response to the bidding, the voice of praise is heard (like the voice spoken of in chap. xiv. 2), as it were, the voice of a great multitude ; and, as it were, the voice of many waters ; and, as it were, the voice of mighty thunders. All nature's tones seem mingled in this voice of praise : it is human, it is majestic as the sea, and glorious as the thunder.

The Anthem :

> Alleluia !
> For the Lord reigned,
> The God, the Almighty.
> Let us rejoice and exult,
> And we will give the glory to Him,
> Because the marriage of the Lamb is come,
> And His wife hath made herself ready.

In this anthem the word for " reigneth " is not in the present tense, as in the English Version ; but, though it is translated here " reigned," we must not understand it of the past only : it expresses the exultation of the servants of God that the Kingship of their God is vindicated.—W. Boyd Carpenter.

THE CHURCH VICTORIOUS

THE BRIDE OF CHRIST

Let us rejoice and be exceeding glad, and let us give the glory unto him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready.
Rev. XIX. 7.

THESE words introduce to us transitionally a new series of visions respecting the final consummation of the union between Christ and His Church, which brings about the end. This series, properly speaking, includes in itself the overthrow of the kings of the earth, the binding of Satan, the thousand years' reign, the loosing of Satan, the final overthrow of the enemy, and the general judgment; but it is not consummated except in the entire union of Christ and His Bride with which the book concludes. So that the words " is come," and " hath made herself ready," are in a measure proleptic. This figure of a marriage between the Lord and His people penetrates all the thoughts and language used respecting Christ and the Church.—H. ALFORD.

The triumphant song being ended, an *epithalamium*, or marriage-song, begins.—M. HENRY.

The betrothal an union of grace in this life passeth over into the union of glory, of which it is said, " Blessed are they who are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb."—E. B. PUSEY.

Why should we wear black for the guests of God?
RUSKIN.

From the dust of the weary highway,
From the smart of sorrow's rod,
Into the royal presence,
They are bidden as guests of God.
The veil from their eyes is taken;
Sweet mysteries they are shown.

Their doubts and fears are over,
For they know as they are known.

For them there should be rejoicing
And festival array,
As for the bride in her beauty,
Whom love hath taken away—
Sweet hours of peaceful waiting
Till the path that we have trod
Shall end at the Father's gateway,
And we are the guests of God.

MARY F. BUTTS.

The "*Marriage*" itself has not as yet arrived, although the day has dawned; and this preparation for the future union is alluded to in such passages as 2 Cor. xi. 2; Eph. v. 27. The word rendered "*Wife*" is used in the sense of "Bride" in Gen. xxix. 21; Deut. xxii. 24 (LXX.); Matt. i. 20. The "Bride" had already been referred to under the figure of "a great multitude which no man could number" (ch. vii. 9),—as the "Woman" with the Crown of Stars (ch. xii. 1),—as the 144,000 on "the Mount Zion." She is the Church of the Last Days—the Elect of Israel and of the Heathen. She has been "*made ready*" in "*the wilderness*" (ch. xii. 6); and having remained faithful in the time of tribulation, the recompense awaits her.—W. LEE.

But what we see in history behind us and in the world about us is, it must be confessed, not "like a bride adorned for her husband." We see something that is admirable, and much that is great and wonderful, but not this splendour of maiden purity. The bridal dress is worn out, and the orange-flower is faded.

J. SEELEY.

THE KING AND HIS ARMY

Upon his head are *many diadems; . . . his name is called The Word of God. . . . And he hath on his garment and on his thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS.*

Rev. XIX. 12, 13, 16.

THE *vesture* and *thigh* are here mentioned together, to denote the robe imperial by the former, and the sword, which is girded on the thigh by the latter, as ensigns of supreme power and authority, especially when on them both, on the robe and the hilt of the sword, is written that most honourable title, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS, thereby noting Him to be superior to all power and force in the world triumphantly victorious over all.—H. HAMMOND.

At His first coming in humility He is known as " The Son of Man " ; at His Second Coming in glory as " THE WORD OF GOD." " And upon his head [are] many diadems." Not now the " crown," the Victor's wreath, but the kingly " diadem," the emblem of His own proper regal authority ; nay more, " many diadems," denoting the concentration of all kingly authority in His Person. Ptolemy Philometor " set two diadems around his head, that of Asia and of Egypt "—1 Macc. xi. 13 ; Artabanus also " in whom the Kingdom of Parthia ended " used two " diadems."—W. LEE.

Ye well know what a *Head* that is ; its wondrous history ye have not forgotten. A Head that bowed meekly and willingly in obedience to a carpenter. A Head whose sweat was as it were great drops of blood. A Head which was wounded by the crown of thorns. A Head that afterwards slept in the grave ; and that rose again from the grave, and looked down upon those who mourned.—C. H. SPURGEON.

THE FOE VANQUISHED

And the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet that wrought the signs in his sight, wherewith he deceived them that had received the mark of the beast, and them that worshipped his image: they twain were cast alive into the lake of fire that burneth with brimstone. . . . And I saw an angel coming down out of heaven, having the key of the abyss and a great chain in his hand. And he laid hold on the dragon, the old serpent, which is the Devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years.

Rev. XIX. 20; *XX.* 1, 2.

THE great truth taught is that final, complete, and certain victory over heathenism will be achieved.

M. STUART.

They will be killed with the destroying sword of Christ, which is not of steel or iron, but goes out of His mouth, and so is a spiritual weapon of resistless might.—BENGEL.

The war is not between class and class, but between righteousness and unrighteousness, truth and falsehood, Christ and Belial. We must remember that the vision is a great figurative representation of the defeat of the anti-Christian powers and principles in the world; this will save us from misapprehending its purpose, and from a bondaged literalism.

W. BOYD CARPENTER.

By the number of a thousand years he hath designated not the quantity of time, but the whole period in which the Church reigns.—GREGORY THE GREAT.

Truth crushed to earth shall rise again;
The eternal years of God are hers
But Error wounded, writhes with pain,
And dies among his worshippers.

W. C. BRYANT.

The binding of the devil is not permitting him to

exercise his whole power of temptation. And the "setting a seal upon him," as signifying that it will be a secret who belong to the devil's part and who do not, as altogether hidden in this life.—AUGUSTINE.

Without inquiring whether these thousand years signify a definite or an indefinite period, what is here revealed unto us is clearly this: that at some period in the future, and for a very long time when that era comes, the power of Satan will be destroyed in the earth, and the adversary himself placed under the strongest restraint. How soon this may be we know not; but that it will not be before we Christians learn to bewail our own inability to put evil away from the midst of us, through our faithlessness to the system under which God hath graciously placed us, as we have never yet done, we may be all but sure. He is to be "laid hold of," we are here told, "bound," "shut up," by an angel of God that is stronger than he (stronger than he, because holier and more loyal), "for a thousand years, and to have a seal set upon him, that he should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years shall be fulfilled." The last thing, perhaps, in the Creation, that we should think of, would be the possibility of a harmless Devil. As "the Devil sinned from the beginning, we suppose he must go on sinning to the end, as if the adorable Lord kept Satan, and wicked men, in existence for ever, only that they might sin. But if what we have said be true, there will not only be one harmless Devil, in the ages to come, but very many such; yea, all beings shall become harmless that ever did harm. "They shall not hurt, nor destroy, in all God's holy mountain" (Isa. xi. 9). God shall wear out those that "wore out the saints of the Most High" (Dan. vii. 25, 26).—A. B. EVANS.

A VISION OF COMPLETED REDEMPTION

THE WORLD'S JUDGMENT

And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat upon it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne; and books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book *of life: and the dead were judged out of the things which were written in the books, according to their works.*

Rev. XX. 11, 12.

"AND the books were opened": or, rather, without the article, not "the books," but "books" indefinitely, many books, such as are spoken of throughout the Scriptures. Many books, the book of each man's life; the books of the written Word of God; the book also of conscience and of memory.

I. WILLIAMS.

A certain divine power is to be understood, by which it will take place that to each person all his works, whether good or evil, will be recalled to memory, and be intuitively seen with marvellous celerity; so that knowledge may accuse or excuse the conscience. Which Divine power has been named a book.—AUGUSTINE.

They appear to me to speak more correctly who interpret the opened books above to be the consciences and works of each one; and the book of life the knowledge of God, which cannot be deceived.—BEDE.

Taking the words as they stand, "another," not *the* other, "*an*other book, which is the book of life," can only mean the book of human existence; the book of their life who will be brought to trial. This book will be set side by side with the other books; and

what is " written " in the other books will be compared with the blots and scrawls, or the fair epistles of Christ, in this. Of what use would it be to open " the books," if this " book of life " were not to be opened ? To judge is, among other things, to compare ; to compare the life of the Heathen with the law of Nature, of the Jew with the law of Moses, of the Christian with the law of Jesus. The elliptical form of the expression here points to the book of which we speak : " another book, which is of life " ; or, of *the* life.

There is one more book, spoken of by the seer elsewhere, and in another part of the New Testament, by a fellow-apostle ; it is " the Lamb's book of life," or simply, " the book of life " ; but in the latter case, the connection will show that it is the same book that is intended as in the former. It is referred to in the last verse of this chapter, in such a way as that it is impossible to confound it with " the book of life " in the text. It is the book in which St. Paul tells us were " the names of Clement and others of his fellow-labourers." It is the book in which are the names of all who will be found worthy to live for ever with God, and in the eternal society of His Son. It is this " book of life " that gives " right " to " the tree of life," insomuch that in the last chapter of this Revelation, the last verse but two in the Bible, what is translated "'book of life," is literally " tree of life." They who have no part in the one are those who will have no part in the other.—A. B. Evans.

There are two books, one of God's omniscience, the other of man's conscience.—E. Leigh.

The rolls of the true Church.—M. Lowman.

THE NEW JERUSALEM

And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth are passed away; and the sea is no more. And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God.
Rev. XXI. 1, 2.

WHAT will it be at last to see a "holy" city! for Londoners, for Parisians, for citizens of all cities upon earth, to see a holy city.

C. G. ROSSETTI.

John's glowing picture of the new Jerusalem, the new heavens and the new land, is a manifest counterpart of the closing chapters of Ezekiel. The most noticeable difference, perhaps, is that Ezekiel has a long and minute description of a temple and its service, while no temple appears in the vision of John, but rather the city itself becomes all temple, nay, a Holy of Holies, being filled with the glory of God.—M. S. TERRY.

A city of Divine workmanship, of spiritual and heavenly material.—E. H. BICKERSTETH.

The former heaven and the former earth *pass by*, giving way to a new heaven and a new earth; death, sorrow, crying, and pain, altogether *pass away*.

BENGEL.

From the symbols of this new Jerusalem we gather that (1) Its plan was conceived in the mind of Him from whom the holy and beloved city came out of heaven, conceived before its foundations were laid, and planned unto its perfect completion; (2) Perfect order, regularity, and symmetry; (3) Unity and completeness, embracing all God's people; (4) Vastness in every sense; (5) Security and impregnability.

W. L. BLACKLEY.

What St. John saw coming down from heaven seems

to have been the plan or model of the new Jerusalem. To " come down from heaven," or from God, in Scripture language, means the Divine origin of a thing, or that God is the Author of it.—Dr. Whitby.

It is impossible to fling a chain upwards, it must be let down upon us, link by link, from on high ; the Father must come forth to meet His child, Christ must become Man, the Holy Spirit must be given, the New Jerusalem must descend from God out of heaven, every good and perfect gift must be received from above.—Dora Greenwell.

There is a spiritual temple, a spiritual tabernacle, and a spiritual Jerusalem, and none of these can be destroyed.—Schoettgen.

The idea of the Church Triumphant is not that which precisely corresponds with the idea presented here : the conception here presented is that of the Kingdom of God in its consummation—a Kingdom for which Christ has, in His Church, broken the way—a Kingdom which has been gradually actualised—the Kingdom of the whole of redeemed and blessed humanity ; the dominion of Christ is merged in that of God, who is present, and shares His Throne with the Lamb.—De Wette.

There are many obscure things in this book ; but in these words, where he says, " God shall wipe away every tear from their eyes, and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain," that which is spoken concerning the future world and immortality, and the eternity of the saints, is spoken with such light, that we ought neither to seek nor to read anything plain in the sacred writings, if we shall think these things obscure.

Augustine.

The hope of the renewal and restitution of all things had been long cherished. Earlier prophets had sanctioned the hope: Isaiah had told of new heavens and new earth (Isa. lxv. 17); Ezekiel had closed his prophecy with the splendid vision of a renewed land of promise (Ezek. xl.–xlviii.); Christ Himself had spoken of the era which He inaugurated as the regeneration (Matt. xix. 28); His followers soon caught the truth that the outcome of the gospel age would be the realisation of all those marvellous visions with which prophets had sustained the fainting hopes of the people of God. The hope was not to be for ever receding as new height after height was surmounted. It will not always be said, "The days are prolonged, and every vision faileth" (Ezek. xii. 22). The fulfilment may seem to tarry; the unbelieving might doubt or scoff (Matt. xxiv. 43; 1 Thess. v. 2; 2 Pet. iii. 4); but those who felt that the gospel was a power of spiritual regeneration, making all things new (2 Cor. v. 17), learned to look forward to the widest and fullest restoration, and to expect new heavens and a new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness (2 Pet. iii. 13).

The characteristic word which runs throughout the description is the word "*new*." All things are to be made *new*: the heavens and earth are *new*; the Jerusalem is *new*. There are two words which are translated *new* in our English version: one of these (*neos*) relates to time; the other (*kainos*) relates to quality. The one would be applied to what had recently come into existence; the other to what showed fresh features. The tomb, for example, in which our Lord's body was laid was new, not in the sense that it had been recently hewn out of the rock, but in the sense that it had never been used before; it may have been long made, but it was one wherein

never man was yet laid. To describe it the second word (*kainos*) is used (Matt. xxvii. 60 and John xix. 41). In the same way, the wine-skins (called " bottles " in our English Version) required for the new wine were not necessarily wine-skins only just prepared for service, but they were skins which had not grown withered, but retained their freshness and elasticity. Here, again, the second word (*kainos*) is employed to describe them. Now, it is this latter word which is used throughout this chapter, and, indeed, throughout the book of Revelation. The newness which is pictured is the newness of freshness : the old, decaying, enfeebling, and corrupting elements are swept away. The aspects and features which will surround the inhabitants of that new earth will be full of novelty to satisfy the progressive instincts of our nature ; but the imagery no less conveys the assurance that the conservative instinct, which clings to what is old, and finds sanctity in the past, will not be disregarded. All things may be new, full of fresh and fair beauty ; but all things will not be *strange* ; there must be some correspondency between the old and the new, when the new things are called new *heavens*, new earth, new *Jerusalem*. The description is figurative, but the spirit of it implies that in the restitution age the sweetness of things loved and familiar will blend with the charm of all that is fresh and new.

W. Boyd Carpenter.

The Church came down from heaven, because she was conceived in the designs of God ; because her Head came down from heaven ; and because the Spirit who formed her, and all the gifts instrumental to her, have been sent from thence.—Quesnel.

THE PLAN OF THE CITY

And the city lieth foursquare, and the length thereof is as great as the breadth ; and he measured the city with the reed, twelve thousand furlongs : the length and the breadth and the height thereof are equal.

Rev. XXI. 16.

ST. JOHN in his great vision sees the mystic city, "the holy Jerusalem," descending out of heaven from God. It is the picture of glorified humanity, of humanity as it shall be when it is brought to its completeness by being thoroughly filled with God. And one of the glories of the city which he saw was its symmetry. Our cities, our developments and presentations of human life, are partial and one-sided. This city out of heaven was symmetrical. In all its three dimensions it was complete. Neither was sacrificed to the other. "The length and the breadth and the height of it are equal." No man can say what mysteries of the yet unopened future are hidden in the picture of the mystic city ; but if that city represents, as I have said, the glorified humanity, then there is much of it that we can understand already. It declares that the perfect life of man will be perfect on every side. In each of its three dimensions it will be complete—the perfect cube of human life which comes down out of heaven from God.—P. BROOKS.

The Church rests, in the solidity of invincible truth, upon the length of faith, the breadth of love, the height of hope, and is not suffered to be "carried about by every wind of doctrine."—BEDE.

There are no defects, no irregularities in the Divine building.—E. H. BICKERSTETH.

The choicest objects of the material universe are grouped together to express the fullness of spiritual

excellency which will mark this Divine abode of the children of God.—T. R. Birks.

The names of the Twelve Apostles, engraven on the foundations of the new Jerusalem, show that the Apostles are the Patriarchs of the tribes of the true Israel, and that the glory of Zion has passed into the Christian Church. Whatsoever is not built on the foundation of Apostolic faith and discipline is not a lively stone in the heavenly Jerusalem. The foundations of the wall of the City are adorned with precious stones. In the variety and beauty of these precious stones is symbolised all the gifts and graces vouchsafed to the Apostles, and shining in brilliant lustre in their several places, like jewels set in beautiful symmetry and harmony for the adorning of the City, and laid in strength and steadfastness for its solid construction and everlasting endurance.—Bp. Wordsworth.

It is all a picture, of course; a picture, not in colours, but in poetry; a picture of the great love of God the Father. The twelve gates, facing each possible approach, are an emblem of that. The doors of the Father's house look out to all the winds of heaven. Men find their way to Him from every quarter. Men come from every direction, but they also come for every kind of reason. Come when or how we may, there are gates of pearl open on every side.—H. R. Mackintosh.

They who would have clear views of heaven must get as near heaven as they can, into the mount of vision, the mount of meditation and faith, from whence, as from the top of Pisgah, they may behold the goodly land of the heavenly Canaan.—M. Henry.

But men's eyes and feet are turned to the world-city.

Burger.

LIFE WITHIN THE CITY

And I saw no temple therein : for the Lord God the Almighty, and the Lamb, are the temple thereof.

Rev. XXI. 22.

THE whole city is a sanctuary. There no building or veil conceals the Sacred Presence. And in this celestial city holy waters flow, and whither they come new life breaks forth. Of this river the beatified will drink and thirst no more. Of the fruit of the trees they will eat and hunger no more. That these realities are emblematic of spiritual truths I cannot doubt. All our outward life in heaven will be sacramental ; and, as emblems, this crystal river seems to import the pure and holy joys of the Eternal Spirit proceeding from the Father and the Son ; and this fruit, in its successive variety, the ever-new and ever-enduring pleasures of immortality. And further, " the leaves of the tree being for the healing of the nations," assures us that the tender ministries of love will not be wanting in that world of cloudless felicity. There will be no disease there, no pain, no death ; and the leaves of the tree of life, by their preventative and preservative virtue, will anticipate every liability to decline or decay.

E. H. BICKERSTETH.

This new Jerusalem shall be the wind-up of the world ; and in it shall stand the tree of life, as there stood one in the goodly garden which was the beginning thereof. Now, this tree of life being in the midst of this city, it signifies that the inhabitants of it shall be sweetly shadowed, refreshed, and defended with its coolness, and also sweetly nourished and comforted with its dainties.—BUNYAN.

The soul that lives ascends frequently and runs

familiarly through the streets of the heavenly Jerusalem, visiting the patriarchs and prophets, saluting the apostles, and admiring the army of the martyrs ; so do thou lead on thy heart and bring it to the palace of the great King.—R. BAXTER.

St. John saw " all nations walking amidst the light " of this celestial city, and it has been observed that all holiness is continually drawn upward to heaven, to embosom itself in glory. Heaven is not merely a thing to come ; it is in one sense a present possession ; for " he that believeth in the Son *hath* everlasting life." It is rather a state than a place—a state within us rather than a thing without us ; it is the likeness, and the enjoyment, and the service of God ; that which every true Christian carries in his bosom now, and to which he will fully enter hereafter, when he shall be made perfect in love. No man can be prepared for the celestial felicity while his heart is destitute of this ; and whosoever has most of it knows most of the unseen and ineffable joys of the righteous. He lives in the vestibule of the heavenly temple, and is ready, whenever its doors shall be opened, to enter into the dwelling-place of God.—J. A. JAMES.

There will come a time when the service of God shall be the beholding of Him ; and though in these stormy seas, where we are now driven up and down, His Spirit is dimly seen on the face of the waters and we are left to cast anchor out of the stern and wish for the day, that day will come, when, with the evangelist on the crystal and stable sea, all the creatures of God shall be full of eyes within, and there shall be no more curse, but His servants shall serve Him, and see His face.—RUSKIN.

We shall behold the invisible.—T. BROWNE.

EPILOGUE

WARNINGS AND PROMISES

And he saith unto me, Seal not up the words of the prophecy of this book; for the time is at hand. He that is unrighteous, let him do unrighteousness still: and he that is filthy, let him be made filthy still: and he that is righteous, let him do righteousness still: and he that is holy, let him be made holy still. Behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to render to each man according as his work is.

Rev. XXII. 10–12.

KEEP them not for thine own use, but freely impart them. "I come quickly"; therefore quicken your pace, bestir yourselves; for your time is short, your task long, your wages inconceivable.

J. TRAPP.

Do not lay them up for future generations; they concern the present. The time of fulfilment will come so *suddenly* that there will be but little space for repentance and amendment. What is done must be done instantly; and let him that is holy persevere and hold fast what he has received.—A. CLARKE.

Two pairs are selected to stand as representatives of the good and of the bad: in these four are included all classes of godly and ungodly: those who sin against society, and those who sin against themselves: those who act honourably, and those who keep themselves pure. . . . Is not this a declaration of the ever-terrible truth, that men are building up their destiny by the actions and habits of their lives? . . . So, slowly, but surely, may the power of being masters of our fate pass out of our hands. It is in this law of our nature that the key of many of the dark problems of the future may lie; and not without a solemn declaration of this law does the Book of Revelation close.

W. BOYD CARPENTER.

It is absolutely necessary for us to gain habits of virtue in this life, if we would enjoy the pleasures of the next. The state of bliss we call heaven will not be capable of affecting those minds which are not thus qualified for it: we must in this world gain a relish of truth and virtue, if we would be able to taste that knowledge and perfection which are to make us happy in the next. The seeds of those spiritual joys and raptures, which are to rise up and flourish in the soul to all eternity, must be planted in her during this her present state of probation. In short, heaven is not to be looked upon only as the reward, but as the natural effect, of a religious life.—ADDISON.

If then a man without religion (supposing it possible) were admitted into heaven, doubtless he would sustain a great disappointment. Before, indeed, he fancied that he could be happy there; but when he arrived there, he would find no discourse but that which he had shunned on earth, no pursuits but those he had disliked or despised, nothing which bound him to aught else in the universe, and made him feel at home, nothing which he could enter into and rest upon. He would perceive himself to be an isolated being, cut away by Supreme Power from those objects which were still entwined around his heart. Nay, he would be in the presence of that Supreme Power, whom he never on earth could bring himself steadily to think upon, and whom now he regarded only as the destroyer of all that was precious and dear to him. Ah! he could not bear the face of the Living God; the Holy God would be no object of joy to him. "Let us alone! What have we to do with Thee?" is the sole thought and desire of unclean souls, even while they acknowledge His majesty.—J. H. NEWMAN.

THE TESTIMONY

He which testifieth these things saith, Yea : I come quickly. Amen : come, Lord Jesus.
Rev. XXII. 20.

THE last words of our Lord to His Church, uttered by the feeble lips of His last apostle, grey-headed and already bending over the tomb, were : " Behold, I come quickly." I wish we could with our whole heart and soul repeat the answer, " Even so, come, Lord Jesus." But we are most of us too devotedly buried in the shadowy nothings of time and space, and too deeply attached to them, to avoid feeling, in the very spirit of unbelief, that it is a day whose postponement is to be desired, since *they* will be torn from our grasp for ever.—F. W. ROBERTSON.

Jesus Christ leaves us under the hope and expectation of His coming. This is His last word delivered from heaven, the last truth of the Gospel of His glory, the last information which He gives to His disciple : that He will come, that He will come surely, that He will come quickly. Grant, Lord, that this word may fill my heart, keep it always lifted up toward Thee, and be the rule of all its motions and desires. Form in it by Thy Spirit this *Amen* of a faithful adherence to all Thy words, of a perfect dependence upon Thy will, of a perfect submission to Thy dispensations, of a sincere reverence towards Thy designs, of an ardent desire of Thy Kingdom. Lord Jesus come, and till Thou comest in Thy glory vouchsafe to come, to live, to work, and to reign in us by Thy almighty grace, by the perfection of Thy ways, by the holiness of Thy Spirit, and by the communion of Thy mysteries ; come and show Thyself victorious in us over all the hostile powers of darkness.—QUESNEL.

We should be waiting and looking out for Christ, waiting and looking out for Him, not merely in order that we may see Him as He passes by, but in order that we may fall down before Him and embrace His feet and receive Him into our hearts. We are to wait for Him by believing in Him, by loving Him, and by doing His will. We are to wait in patience for His own time. But we are not to wait in idleness ; we are not to wait with our hands folded, with the eyes of our understanding closed, with a hood over our hearts. No, we are to wait looking out for Him, in the assurance that He will come, in the assurance that if He finds us waiting, like diligent servants, in faith and love and obedience, He will reward us with the riches of His grace.

J. C. HARE.

What if this present were the world's last night ?

J. DONNE.

As appearing alive after death, He became to us our morning star, while He furnished us in His own Person with an instance of resurrection, and led the way to the light that was to follow. " O Jerusalem, look about thee toward the East, and behold the joy that cometh unto thee from God." He is Himself the Morning Star which He will give. " The first and the last " ; for this one and same star shines the first in the evening, or the last at morning.

GREGORY THE GREAT.

" *The Spirit saith, Come* " ; for by His Spirit alone in the heart can we wish for His coming ; His Spirit can alone desire, can alone prepare us for that His coming ; and " *the Bride*," His Church, also in waiting, " *says, Come*,"—even as a bride looks for the coming of her lord, and " makes herself ready " for that coming. " They that love His appearing " is the very mark of

His elect ; they are ever " looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God." And they that are " heavy laden " also, that " *thirst* after righteousness," to which they feel that they have not attained, they also *may come*. The fountain is open—the dispensation of the Spirit—the free gift of the grace of God. His hand is open. Let every one come and be filled. Nothing is needed but earnestly to desire. " *Let him that is athirst come* " and drink.—I. WILLIAMS.

Our Lord's earthly life was lived, and His ministry fulfilled, in the light of His Return to Judgment. In His Sermon on the Mount, in His charge to His Apostles, in His private discourses, in His most impressive parables, in His farewell converse, in His good confession before the Sanhedrin—He pointed to That Day. After His Ascension, the promise of His Return was the consolation which angels poured into the bereaved hearts of the Apostles. Thus it runs as a golden thread through all the Epistles. St. Paul never wearies of it ; St. James urges patience in contemplating it ; St. Peter reminds the elders of the Advent of the Chief Shepherd ; St. John comforts by the assurance, " When He shall appear, we shall be like Him " ; St. Jude re-echoes Enoch's warning, " The Lord cometh." And the last book of the inspired canons bears on its forefront, " Behold, He cometh with clouds," and closes with the threefold watchword, " I come quickly."

E. H. BICKERSTETH.

O dull of heart ! enclosed doth lie
In each " Come, Lord " a " Here am I " . . .
Thy very prayer to thee was given,
Itself a messenger from heaven."

R. C. TRENCH.

An Investigation

THE BOOK OF REVELATION

PRINCIPLES OF INTERPRETATION

BY

ARTHUR S. PEAKE, D.D.

THE
THIRD
STUDY

Arthur Samuel Peake, M.A., D.D., was Professor of Biblical Exegesis at Victoria University, Manchester. Among his works are: *A Guide to Biblical Study*, *Commentary on Hebrews in the Century Bible*, *Commentary on Colossians in the Expositor's Greek Testament*, *The Problem of Suffering in the Old Testament*, *Commentary on Job in the Century Bible*, *The Religion of Israel*, *Christianity, its Nature and its Truth*, *The Quintessence of Paulinism*, *The Revelation of John*, *The Roots of Hebrew Prophecy and Jewish Apocalyptic*, *Paul the Apostle—his Personality and Achievement*, etc.

THE BOOK OF REVELATION

PRINCIPLES OF INTERPRETATION

By Arthur S. Peake, D.D.

THE history of Biblical interpretation abounds in strange perversities, quaint fancies, and misguided theories; but nowhere, perhaps, have these been exhibited on a larger scale than in the exposition of the Book of Revelation. In spite of the explicit affirmation in the work itself that, even as its author writes, the time is at hand (i. 1, 3; xxii. 6 f., 10, 12, 20), systems of interpretation have flourished on a vast scale which have relegated to a distant future the consummation he declared to be so near. Two main systems of this illegitimate exposition have been fashioned. One, which is known as the futurist theory, regards the whole of the prophetic sections in the book as still unfulfilled and destined to be accomplished within a brief period at the end of the present dispensation. The other, commonly known by the uncouth title "the continuous-historical interpretation," treats the book as having been in course of fulfilment from the author's time down to our own; so that it is possible to match the predictions of the author by events in history during the intervening period, and from a calculation of the correspondences to fix the date at which the period of 1,260 years begins and thus to determine the point at which the consummation will be reached and discover our own position in the development which is to lead up to it. Age after age has seen these calculations stultified by their non-fulfilment; though no failure shakes the confidence of its devotees in the soundness of the method or in the probability attaching to the new forecast which they promptly proceed to establish.

But dispassionate students will inevitably draw the inference that the unbroken series of failure to reach results which history will verify points to a radical error in the method itself. How remote indeed it was from the author's intention is clear from the fact that the book is not to be " sealed," that is, withheld from publication, since the time is at hand (xxii. 10). If the author of Daniel was instructed to seal up his prophecy because the time of fulfilment was remote (Dan. xii. 4, cf. 9)—though in the author's view this was but a few centuries—how could the author of the Revelation be instructed to publish his book at once since the time was at hand, if more than eighteen centuries were to go by with his prophecy still unfulfilled ?

When we advance from these general considerations to the detailed fulfilments which are discovered in history we are struck by the great divergence between expositors of this school in the identifications which they propose and the triviality of many of the events which they gravely suppose to have been singled out for prediction, while events of stupendous importance, such as the breaches in the unity of the Church, the invention of printing, the discovery of the New World, are totally omitted. Moreover, although this type of interpretation does not necessarily involve the view that a day in the Apocalypse is used for a year, yet this school of interpreters has almost invariably (Bengel is the most eminent exception) based its chronological scheme on this foundation. But the foundation is entirely insecure ; there is no warrant for supposing that a day is to be taken in any other than its literal sense, nor has this interpretation any support in the opinion of the early Church.

The futurist theory is not exposed to some of these

objections, but it contradicts even more flagrantly the explicit statement of the book as to the imminence of the events predicted. What would be the propriety of the injunction that the book must be published at once since the time of fulfilment was at hand, if more than eighteen hundred years at least had to elapse before even a beginning could be made with the fulfilment? Moreover it is against all the analogy of prophecy and apocalyptic alike for a book of this class not to be in close touch with the conditions of the author's own day.

One type of interpretation detaches the book from chronology altogether. It regards the author as concerned with principles rather than events. His work exhibits no development in time. Figures are symbolical, not to be taken literally. The thousand years during which Satan is bound, for example, must not be understood as conveying the length of a period, but as expressing the idea of completeness. That Satan is bound for a thousand years means nothing more or less than that Satan is completely bound. This is most improbable. Undoubtedly the author had principles which he firmly held and resolutely applied. But he is face to face with a definite situation, and his aim is to interpret that situation, uncovering its roots in the past and divining its imminent development. He affirms explicitly that his theme is the things which must shortly come to pass (i. 1, 19; iv. 1; xxii. 6, 10). If his main purpose was to expound the principles, he adopted a method admirably designed to conceal them. He would have achieved his purpose far better if he had stated them in plain and simple language.

We are left, then, with the preterist interpretation. The author did not unfold a long development, stretch-

ing over eighteen centuries at least ; nor did his vision leap the intervening centuries and fix on a point still future to ourselves. He believed the critical period to be at hand and destined to last but a short time.

But if the writer contemplated an impending crisis which was to be quickly ended by the Second Coming and the ushering in of the millennium, how did a book which was so quickly discredited by history survive this demonstration of its fundamental error and even gain a place in the Canon of the New Testament ? It may be urged in reply that essentially the same difficulty arises with reference to the predictions of the speedy Second Coming in the Gospels themselves. It is essentially no more difficult in the one case than in the other. And if it is retorted that the Apocalypse is far more detailed and indeed precise in its forecast of the future, it must be pointed out on the other hand that this future is foretold in a form which allows great elasticity of interpretation. Partly this is due to the literary convention of apocalyptic which employs ambiguous imagery rather than plain speech. Hence the apocalyptist need not have been himself disillusioned if the events he anticipated failed punctually to happen ; for this might mean no more than that he had himself misunderstood the symbols in which the message entrusted to him was clothed. Our modern prophetic interpreters, when their most confident and detailed predictions are negatived by the march of history, do not lose faith either in the truth of the prophecies themselves or in their method of interpretation. They assume that there has been some error in their calculation which they must rectify. And if even the seer himself could see with equanimity his own anticipations disappointed while he did not doubt

the truth of his vision, it was still easier for the readers, who had only the ambiguous oracles themselves, to acquiesce in the belief that they had misunderstood their meaning. The possibility of reinterpretation finds a curious illustration in the eagle vision in 2 Esdras. The seer is told that the eagle " is the fourth kingdom which appeared in vision to thy brother Daniel." Then the significant sentence follows: " But it was not expounded unto him, as I now expound it unto thee or have expounded it " (2 Esdras xii. 11 f.). Moreover the author was dealing with traditional material not a little of which may well have been obscure to himself. This material he transmitted faithfully; and when his expectations were falsified, he would have less difficulty in revising them in the light of experience, while still believing that his predictions were true; since their vagueness made it possible to readjust them to the new situation. The elasticity of the language is such that modern interpreters have themselves disputed as to the author's construction of the programme for the last days.

Much discussion has been roused over another problem of interpretation. We seem again and again, as we read the book, to be brought to the final crisis. Thus when the sixth seal is opened tremendous convulsions take place in heaven and on earth, and the inhabitants of the world implore the mountains to fall on them and save them from the wrath of God and the Lamb, " for the great day of their wrath is come; and who is able to stand? " This suggests that the Day of Judgment has actually arrived. And yet this comes almost at the beginning of the prophecy. The harvest and the vintage of the earth similarly suggest the last judgment. Yet the whole series of seven

bowls has still to follow. It is accordingly not surprising that many interpreters have adopted a theory of recapitulation ; that is, that the seals, the trumpets, and the bowls all deal with the same development, culminating in the final judgment, but handling the theme in different ways. This theory is, on the whole, improbable. The author presumably is following a progressive development, but his material fetters him, and the combination of elements of different origin has presented difficulties which have hindered the consistent unfolding of his main scheme.

Another point affecting the interpretation of the book is the question how far the language of the author is to be taken literally and how far it is symbolical. It is undeniable that the writer employs symbolism such as the four horsemen, the last three of which stand for war, famine, and pestilence, while the significance of the first is disputed. The Beast is the Roman Empire, the heads are the individual emperors. The scarlet woman is Rome. But the seer interprets these for us, or the symbolism is clear in itself. But interpreters have found symbolism on a large scale where the writer meant his descriptions to be taken literally. This is particularly the case with natural phenomena. An earthquake means an earthquake, not a political convulsion. If the sky is crumpled so that the heavenly bodies fall to the earth, or a huge flaming mountain is cast into the sea, or hell vomits forth demon locusts, or earth is invaded by millions of demon horsemen, it is the writer's anticipation that these things will happen literally just as they are described. We must remember that the author's conception of the universe was pre-Copernican. For him the universe existed in three tiers, heaven above the solid firmament

not so far away, sun, moon, and stars moving in their tracks across its lower surface; hell beneath our feet connected with the surface of the earth by a shaft, the opening of which was sealed up by a cover. In that subterranean and submarine abyss there were uncanny demonic monsters, ready to pour in dense swarms upon earth if an angel unlocked the cover which normally barred their escape. Taken realistically, the author's descriptions are far more weird and terrible than if we reduce them to insipid allegories or to religious and moral commonplaces.

THE CRITICAL PROBLEMS

The problems which arise for discussion under this heading are those of date, authorship, and unity. It is difficult to keep them apart, since the conclusions reached with reference to one react on the discussion of the others. The generally accepted view for many centuries has been that the Apocalypse, the Fourth Gospel, and the three Epistles of John were all written by John the Son of Zebedee. It was asserted by Irenæus that the Revelation dated from the reign of Domitian. Since the Fourth Gospel was also supposed to belong to the close of the first century, it was obviously difficult to attribute to the same author books written so near together, in view of the very striking difference between them. It was accordingly easier to believe that the books were by the same author if they could be separated by twenty-five or thirty years. It was natural, therefore, that some of those who attributed the two books to the same author should favour the view that the Apocalypse was written before the destruction of Jerusalem. Hort, who on independent grounds

accepted the earlier date for the Revelation, said : " It would be easier to believe that the Apocalypse was written by an unknown John than that both books belong alike to St. John's extreme old age." The question of the unity of the book is also important for that of date. The early date seems to be demanded by xi. 1 f., which, if its plain sense is to be accepted, definitely assumes that the Temple is still standing. If, however, the book is not a unity, but contains elements of different dates, it would be quite possible to accept the date to which Irenæus assigned it and yet allow that elements of earlier date were incorporated in it.

We may begin with the question of the unity. Leaving aside older suggestions as to the incorporation of earlier and later elements, Weizsäcker was the first modern scholar to suggest that the work was a compilation. The suggestion was taken up by Völter, his pupil. Vischer, a theological student, suggested to Harnack, his teacher, that it was for the most part a Jewish apocalypse, slightly worked over by a Christian hand. His arguments greatly impressed Harnack, who worked through it from this point of view and became convinced of its correctness. The search for older documents embedded in the book was carried on with zest by numerous scholars. But this phase of the investigation lasted only a few years. In his work entitled *Creation and Chaos* (1895) Gunkel pointed out that the evidence on which the analytic critics relied might frequently be explained by derivation not from different documents but from an ancient eschatological tradition which in the course of its long history had gathered up various discordant elements. He also broke away from the view that the book was to be

explained from the contemporary situation. He did not entirely deny the use of sources, nor eliminate the conditions of the time as a factor in its origin. But his tendency was to reduce these things to a minimum. The drift of subsequent discussion has been in the direction of recognising that the book is the work of an author, not of a compiler who simply put earlier documents together in a mechanical way, adding but little of his own. And this judgment is confirmed by the uniformity of language and style which was recognised long ago, but has been demonstrated in elaborate detail recently by Dr. Charles. Lohmeyer, our most recent commentator, has argued for the recognition of an artistic scheme in the composition of the book of great complexity and elaborated to the finest detail. Dr. Charles, however, admits that the author has used sources both Hebrew and Greek, translating the former and in a few cases taking over the latter as they stood.

So much, indeed, it would seem difficult to deny. Jewish elements have been incorporated in the book. Could any Christian have originated the oracle predicting that the Temple with its altar and worshippers will be spared (xi. 1 f.) when it was well known that Jesus had prophesied that not one stone should be left on another? This would not prevent a Christian author from adopting it in his own work, especially if it stood in a larger context, because he would assume that its meaning was other than that which lay on the surface. Nor is it easily credible that a Christian writer, controlled by his knowledge of the history of Jesus, could have represented the Messiah as caught up to the throne of God immediately after His birth, there to be kept in safety from the murderous malice

of the dragon (xii. 5). A Jewish writer, for whom the career of the Messiah lay in the future, could depict his career as he chose, since he was unfettered by history. It is, therefore, probable that this section has been derived from a Jewish source. But behind this Jewish, we must postulate a pagan, origin. The story as a whole resembles a pagan myth rather than Jewish prophecy, and this is corroborated by the fact that Dieterich pointed out a very similar story of the birth of Apollo in Greek mythology, while Bousset brought forward a similar Egyptian story of the birth of Horus. Presumably, then, there was a widespread myth telling how the dragon of darkness and chaos sought to destroy the mother who was to give birth to the radiant sun-god who, he has learnt, is to destroy him. The mother escapes, the child is born and later kills the dragon. The secondary character of the story in the Apocalypse is clear from the fact that while the flight of the mother is preserved it has lost its original significance, which was to secure the birth of the child in safety, and from the strange representation that while the dragon is actually in the presence of the expectant mother he does not attack her but waits till the child is born, and then is foiled by his instantaneous translation to the throne of God. These instances render it probable that however the author subdued his material to his own purpose, he drew none the less on earlier sources.

It may be convenient to touch at this point on theories of dislocation. The difficulties of deriving a consistent scheme from the closing chapters of the book are well known. Dr. Charles has argued that the author died before he could revise his work, or put the materials of xx. 4–xxii. into their legitimate

order. An unintelligent disciple edited the work and, apart from various interpolations, arranged the closing sections in a totally wrong order. Dr. Charles has sought to restore the original order. The opinion of a scholar who has done so much in the editing and interpreting of the apocalyptic literature, and who has lavished much time and labour on our book, must naturally be received with great respect. So far as we have observed, his view has not met with much acceptance from his fellow-students.

A more revolutionary theory was put forward by Dr. Oman in 1923. This was to the effect that the sheets on which the work was written were seriously disarranged. More recently he has published a revised theory (1928), which works out more accurately than its predecessor, but which demands the hypothesis that a whole sheet, probably the most important for the interpretation of the work, has been irretrievably lost. It is impossible in our space to discuss these theories of dislocation ; but it is due to distinguished scholars who have put them forward that the attention of students should be directed to them.

As to the date, it has already been mentioned that the book was thought by the great majority of modern scholars, till near the close of the nineteenth century, to have been written before the destruction of Jerusalem. This was thought to be demonstrated by the prediction that the Temple would be preserved (xi. 1 f.), which implied that it was still standing, and by the explicit statement that the sixth emperor was on the throne (xvii. 10). But the recognition that earlier and later elements are present in the book makes it possible for us without strained interpretations to assign the book as it stands to a date later than the fall of Jerusalem.

Assuming that the sixth emperor is Vespasian, the first five being Augustus, Tiberius, Caligula, Claudius, Nero, the date of that passage is more probably in the latter part of his reign! For the anticipation that Nero would return from Parthia points to the later rather than the earlier part of Vespasian's reign. It is, therefore, not surprising that Mommsen and some New Testament scholars do assign the book to this date. Yet there are grave objections to it. It has not the slightest support in tradition, nor does it agree with the prominence given in the book to the worship of the emperor.

And there are two other difficulties which call for consideration in connection with suggestions as to a later date. Side by side with the anticipation that Nero will return from Parthia we have the expectation that he will come back from hell. There is also a reference to an eighth emperor which is more intelligible if the sixth emperor was no longer on the throne. The saga of the returning Nero passed through two stages. In the former of these it was assumed that Nero had not merely died, but had escaped and would come back again. But as time passed on, the belief that he was still alive faded; but the belief persisted that the divine line of the Cæsars could not really have become extinct. Accordingly the anticipation grew up that Nero would come back from hell. But it is very unlikely that this stage was reached before the reign of Domitian.

As to the second point, the author who wrote under the sixth emperor adds: "the other is not yet come; and when he cometh he must continue a little while" (xvii. 10). There cannot be more than seven emperors, because the Beast has only seven heads. Whether the

writer identified the seventh with any particular person is uncertain. If with Titus, Vespasian's son, he may have anticipated that he would be overthrown by Nero. In that case the number seven would not be exceeded, because Nero was already included in it. But in the following verse we read : " And the beast that was, and is not, is himself also an eighth and is of the seventh ; and he goeth into perdition." It is clear that the writer of this has to reckon with eight emperors. This implies that the passage cannot well have been written before the reign of the seventh emperor, that is Ṭitus. Since Antichrist has not come in Titus, another emperor must succeed him. But since the number seven is fixed, the eighth emperor must be one of the seven, reigning a second time. This verse was apparently, then, written under Titus. The alternative would be to suppose that the eighth emperor, that is Domitian, was on the throne. This view is accepted by some scholars, who take the eighth emperor to be Domitian and identify him with the Nero who was to come back from the abyss. This, however, is improbable in the last degree. Domitian was, indeed, regarded as a second Nero, but never as Nero himself. Domitian was already in his teens when Nero died ; and it would be pushing the extravagance of rhetoric beyond all bounds to describe him as one of his seven predecessors, " the beast that cometh up out of the abyss."

But it is probable that the anticipation that Nero would return not from Parthia, but from hell, did not originate till the latter part of Domitian's reign, so that the reference to the beast ascending out of the abyss is apparently of that date, though conceivably it may be simply taken over from the apocalyptic tradition. But

there are other grounds for concluding that the book was not compiled till the reign of Domitian. Our oldest evidence is explicit on this point. Irenæus, writing about A.D. 180, says of the revelation received by the author, " it was seen not long ago, but almost in our own generation at the end of the reign of Domitian." This evidence is very weighty. The precision of it suggests that Irenæus was speaking out of fuller knowledge. Hort, while he favoured the earlier date, says : " If external evidence alone could decide, there would be a clear preponderance for Domitian. And this is corroborated by the internal evidence. The conflict between the Church and the empire suits the time of Domitian better than any other. For the crucial issue is the worship of the emperor ; and beyond all his predecessors, with the exception of Caligula, Domitian insisted on the divinity of the emperor. Other indications of Domitianic date are too uncertain for stress to be laid upon them.

The problem of authorship is very complicated. Justin Martyr, writing about the middle of the second century, affirms that it was written by the Apostle John, and his evidence cannot be lightly set aside. It is confirmed by other early writers ; and denials were prompted by dislike of the book. It has nevertheless been widely rejected by modern scholars. The author speaks of himself as John, and there is no sound reason for supposing that he was using a pseudonym. It was, indeed, a convention of earlier apocalyptic to use the names of ancient worthies, such as Enoch, as the recipients of the revelation. But the reasons for this scarcely held good for a Christian apocalypse. We may, therefore, assume that the author's name was John ; but since John was a very common name we

cannot assume that he was one of the Johns otherwise known to us. The question has been complicated by its relation to the rest of the Johannine literature. The view, which has been held with scarcely any challenge through the greater part of the history of the Church, has been that the whole of the Johannine literature was the work of the Apostle John. Dionysius of Alexandria argued skilfully that the Revelation could not have been written by the author of the Fourth Gospel, and this was tantamount to the rejection of its apostolic origin.

In modern times this attribution of the Gospel and the Apocalypse to different authors has become almost universal. But Harnack confessed to the critical heresy that both were written by the same author, though, of course, he believed that the Apocalypse incorporated an earlier Jewish work. In our most recent important commentary Lohmeyer seems inclined to attribute both books to the same author whom he identifies with the Presbyter John. There are undoubtedly marked affinities between the two works which point to their origination in the same intellectual and spiritual environment. But the differences in style, in treatment, and in point of view are such as to make identity of authorship most improbable. If, then, the apostle wrote the Fourth Gospel, another John must have written the Apocalypse. If, on the other hand, the apostle wrote the Apocalypse, he cannot be the author of the Gospel. But possibly he may have written neither. Dr. J. H. Bernard, in his posthumous commentary on the Gospel (1929), attributes the Apocalypse to the apostle and the Gospel to the presbyter, who, he thinks, derived his material from the apostle.

Some of the current objections to the apostolic

authorship have but little weight. Had the book been just a literary composition, written in cold blood on the normal level of consciousness and self-possession, they would have had more force. But we are dealing with an apocalypse in which we have to allow for ecstasy and second sight, as well as for the use of older material and traditional lore, some of it, it may be, not fully understood. Nor ought we to rule out the possibility of apostolic authorship on the ground that the apostle was martyred by Jews in Palestine. The evidence for this widely accepted critical myth is too flimsy to bear any weight. But if we assign the book to the reign of Domitian and accept the most natural interpretation of i. 9, that the author was in Patmos as a convict sentenced to hard labour, then it is improbable that he was the apostle, in view of the advanced age he must have attained at this date. It is, of course, possible that the Revelation may contain something from his pen.

At this point it will be convenient to sum up the critical results. The Book of Revelation was written in the latter part of the reign of Domitian, about A.D. 93–5, by a Jewish-Christian prophet who bore the name of John, and was in close contact with the churches in Asia. The impulse to write came to him in the island of Patmos, to which he had apparently been banished as a convict, sentenced to hard labour for his profession and practice of Christianity. He was not the author of the Fourth Gospel, since the personality of its author seems to belong to a type quite different from that revealed in our book. It is possible, though scarcely probable, that he was the Apostle John ; less unlikely that he was the Presbyter John. But he may equally well have been a prophet otherwise un-

known to us. Although not identical with the author of the Fourth Gospel, and indeed differing rather radically from him, there are notable affinities between the two works which suggest that their authors shared the same intellectual and spiritual environment. In compiling his work he drew on the Old Testament and on earlier apocalypses. It is not improbable that he incorporated some earlier material, translating it into his barbaric Greek. Some of this material was Jewish, some of it ultimately pagan, though it reached the author through a Jewish channel.

THE CRISIS AND THE MESSAGE

But for his banishment the author might have achieved his purpose by visitation of the churches addressed. Be that as it may, now that he was exiled to Patmos, writing was the only method of communication left to him. The obligation to write was laid upon him partly by the internal condition of the churches, partly by the external situation. The churches had now been in existence for several decades, and though great differences existed between them there was, along with much to praise in some of them, not a little to cause dissatisfaction in others, notably Sardis and Laodicea—a loss of the glow of their first love, the flush of their original enthusiasm, a lukewarmness, a self-complacency, compromise with the world, toleration of false and immoral teaching. Grave warnings are uttered, but radiant promises are made to the victors in the strife. It is, however, the external situation which chiefly concerns him. The end is drawing near, but before the consummation is reached the period of the great tribulation must be traversed, and history is moving rapidly towards it.

While the fourth evangelist meets the needs of his readers with a Gospel, with a new record and interpretation of the life and teaching of Jesus, our author meets them with an apocalypse. Apocalypses have been happily described as "tracts for bad times." They rest on a systematisation of the disconnected data in earlier prophecy which they weave into a chronological scheme of the world's history with special stress on the final period. They employ an elaborate symbolism, often bizarre and obscure. They do not regard the deliverance as evolving out of the existing political situation, but as brought about by the sudden intervention of God when the hour of destiny strikes. Without any preparation in the visible order the kingdoms of this world crash in ruin and the everlasting kingdom of God is established upon earth.

Our author writes in bad times, which he expects to become rapidly much worse. He is a student of Old Testament prophecy, especially Ezekiel, and greatly influenced by the Old Testament Apocalypse, the Book of Daniel. He has drawn upon non-canonical Jewish apocalypses and the apocalyptic tradition, using them in his own way and impressing his own interpretation upon them.

He sees in the Roman Empire, at present supreme, the relentless foe of the Church. It is not simply anti-Christian, it is antitheistic. It is the Beast which has been evoked from the deep by the dragon. For the dragon, that is the devil, sought to forestall the foe which was otherwise fated to vanquish him. He waited till the birth of the Messiah in order to devour Him; but he was foiled by the immediate rapture of the child to the throne of God. Turning his rage upon the heavenly mother, he vainly pursued her, but the

earth helped the woman and swallowed the stream which the dragon had sent to overwhelm her. She effected her escape to the wilderness where she was beyond his reach. In a conflict with Michael he was worsted and cast down upon the earth. Knowing that his time was short, he concentrated all his energy on persecuting the seed of the woman. In pursuance of his plan to do the uttermost mischief to God's people on earth in the brief breathing-space that is left to him, he equips with authority the Beast he has summoned from the sea. This Beast becomes the object of worship to all the inhabitants of the world save those whose names had been written from the foundation of the world in the slain Lamb's book of life.

The number of the Beast is 666. There has been much controversy as to the right solution of this number. Strictly speaking, the Beast is the Empire and its heads are individual emperors. But since each emperor in his turn can say " L'état, c'est moi," the Beast may also be regarded as an individual emperor. The author's statement that the number is the number of a man suggests that an individual is intended in the present case. It is possible that a complete explanation would give two solutions, the number of the Beast which is also the number of a man. The original name of the Beast which had the numerical value 666 may have come down in tradition ; if so it can now only be conjectured. But the seer has made the discovery that the number of the Beast also applies to a man. It is this rather than the original significance which concerns us, and by far the most probable of the solutions that have been offered is Nero Cæsar in Hebrew letters. The worship of the Beast is zealously promoted by a second beast, possibly an individual, more probably

some corporate authority with power to institute a boycott of all who refuse to receive the mark of the Beast or to do him homage. Refusal to worship the image of the Beast is punished with death. The Beast makes war upon the saints. An appalling persecution from which few, if any, will survive is accordingly to fall upon the Church. Its inspiration comes from the dragon who employs the Beast, that is, the Roman imperial power concentrated in Nero who has returned, and the second beast or the false prophet, as his instruments. The test imposed is the worship of the emperor or his image, and all who refuse to submit to it will suffer martyrdom. Resistance is not permissible ; it would, indeed, be futile. The inevitable must be accepted : " Here is the patience and the faith of the saints."

For such faith and patience the Christian has ample grounds.—The vision opens with the revelation of God and His throne, the Almighty Creator and Ruler of the universe. It continues with a vision of the Lamb, who through suffering and death has vindicated His right to open the book with seven seals, that is, to fathom the Divine counsels and control the unfolding of destiny. We have seen the sealing of the hundred and forty-four thousand and the unending bliss of the multitude which no man can number. We have seen the dragon thwarted in his plan to devour the Messiah and know that the destined conqueror is safely hidden with God till the hour fixed by the Divine decree has come when He will lead forth the armies of heaven to destroy His foes. We know that the dragon has already been defeated by Michael and cast out of heaven ; and if he rages with such violence upon earth, this, while of evil omen for the immediate future, is yet a sure token that he knows that his time is short.

And as the Lamb breaks the seals of the Book of Destiny, or the angels of the trumpet sound their sinister blast, or the angels of the bowls pour out their poisonous contents upon the world, plague after plague, calamity after calamity, torment or slay its godless inhabitants, even before the supreme crisis itself arrives.

The author desires above all things to inspire his readers with courage. He is concerned that they should not underrate the peril to which they will be exposed and which will to all eternity make the apostates rue their cowardice. He has no word of sympathy for the fearful. His only message to them is that they must stand fast whatever pressure persecution may put upon them. He anticipates that the worship of the emperor, which was practised with special zeal in Asia, will become more and more fanatical. The devotees will brand themselves on the hand or the forehead with the mark of the Beast. They will insist that their neighbours shall show their loyalty by imitating their example. At length a boycott will be enforced against those who do not bear the mark. Thus the authorities will easily be able to select those to whom the test of sacrificing to the genius of the emperor may be offered ; and refusal will be punished with death. Those who yield to the temptation will have to pay a terrible price for their weakness. They will be tormented with fire and brimstone, the smoke of their torment will go up for ever and ever, and they will have no rest day or night. On the other hand, how blessed is the lot reserved for the martyrs, for those who come triumphant out of the great tribulation, who emerge victorious from the conflict with the Beast ! Every letter to the seven churches has its special beatitude for " him that

overcometh." And the author has painted in glowing colours the glories of the New Jerusalem, and with great tenderness the bliss of the redeemed.

It is with mingled feelings that the modern Christian reads the Revelation of John. The ordinary Bible reader, if he has not made a hobby of prophetic interpretation, naturally finds himself completely baffled by much in the book to which he does not possess the key. There are favourite passages to which he turns again and again—the opening chapter, the letters to the seven churches, the latter part of the seventh chapter, the closing chapters with their glowing descriptions of the heavenly city. But for the most part the Apocalypse is for him a book sealed with seven seals. And even those who read it in the light which modern investigation has cast upon it find themselves alternately attracted and repelled by it. Apocalyptic is itself uncongenial to us. Its bizarre symbolism violates our canons of taste, its catastrophic conception of the climax of history does not harmonise with our faith in ascending and gradual development. Its predestinarian scheme of an unalterable programme of history, its pessimism as to mankind in general, and the lurid fate which awaits the vast majority of our race repels us. Its whole conception of the nearness of the end which awaits the present order has been refuted by the continuance of history for more than eighteen hundred years.

But there is much to put on the other side. Confronted with a deeply materialistic civilisation, the author realised that the ultimate realities were spiritual. The downfall of Babylon is due not simply to her war upon the saints, but in the first instance to her luxury

and wantonness. He knew that the forces which counted most and would finally triumph were spiritual forces. The conflict was decided in heavenly places. The protagonists were not Cæsar and the Church, but the dragon and the archangel or the dragon and the Lamb. The victory is won first in heaven, and this determines the issue on earth. Against a ubiquitous and aggressive paganism, and in particular the cult of the emperor, he emphasises monotheism. But it is monotheism of the Christian type, there is no higher doctrine of the Person of Christ in the New Testament than in this book. In face of lax morality and false teaching he maintained inflexibly the radical distinction between good and evil. He held without any misgiving to the absolute triumph of Christianity. When we remember the position of the Church at that time, its utter weakness in comparison with the power of the empire, such faith must seem to us sublime. He had no doubt whatever as to the ultimate triumph of truth and right. In the radiant future to which he looks forward no curse will hang over the redeemed; sickness, pain, and sorrow will be for ever banished, death and bereavement will be known no more.

Unlike the usual apocalypse, which is often dreary reading, the Revelation of John for the most part holds the reader's attention. It is no mere literary exercise on which the author is engaged, no task simply for learning and ingenuity, but a matter of life and death, a conflict in which the decisions of time are charged with eternal significance. His style rises to match the majesty of his theme. But he touches us most deeply in the sweet and noble eloquence with which he paints for us the glories of the heavenly city and the perfect bliss of those who dwell for ever before the throne of God.

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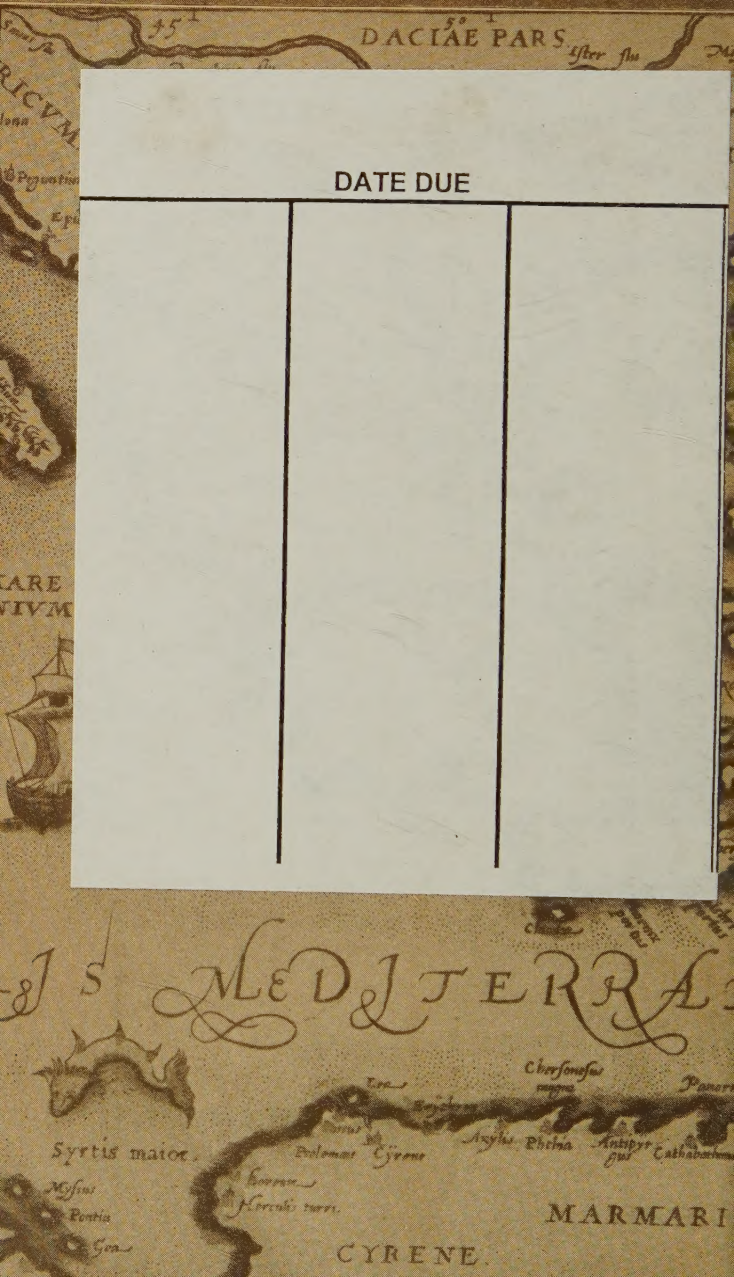

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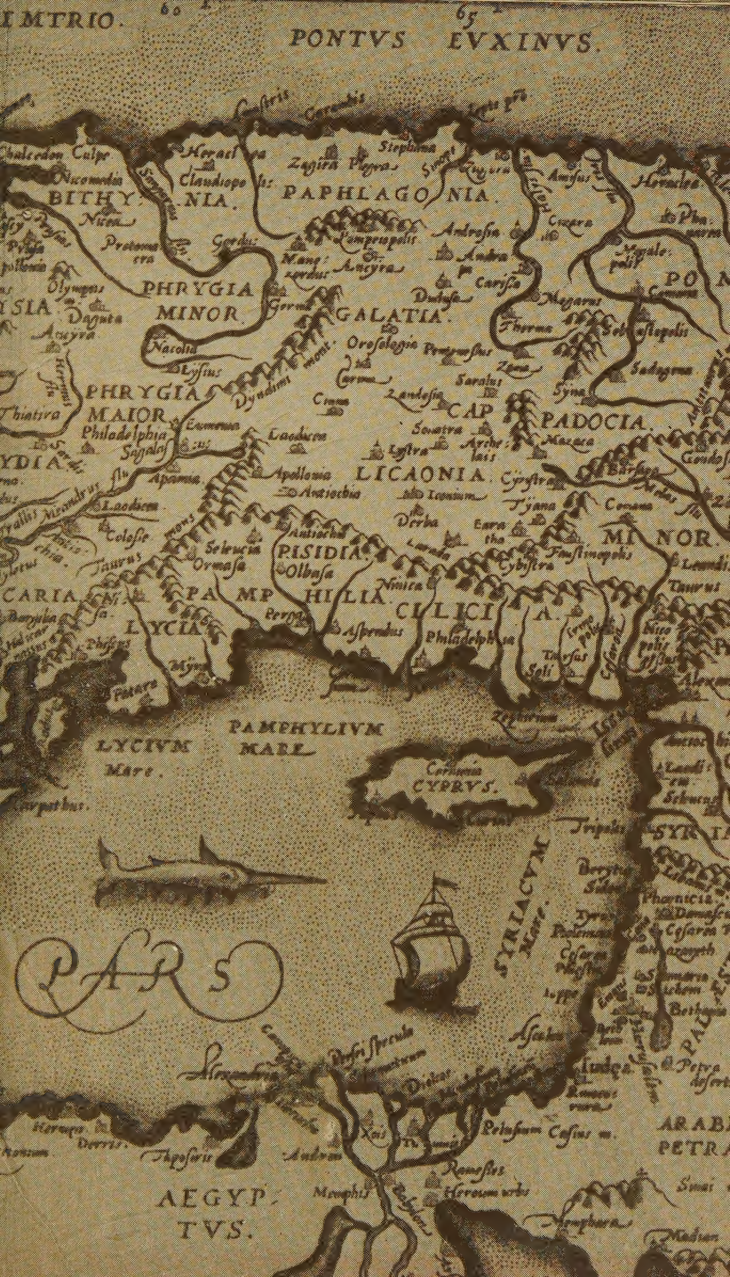
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